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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to identify and describe the economic impacts and benefits of Florida public libraries. The study objectives were to: describe the role of public libraries in economic development; identify and describe the range of specific activities and programs engaged in to support economic development; identify factors that contribute to the success of involvement in economic development; propose a study, based on findings reported here, to measure specific return on investment from public libraries; and offer recommendations and strategies for how public libraries in Florida might be more effective in supporting economic development. Data collection efforts involved a multi-method approach consisting of a literature review, focus groups, a financial analysis of Florida public libraries, a statewide sample survey of public library patrons, a survey of library directors and ranch managers, librarian service logs, and group interviews. Results indicate that patrons believe that public libraries contribute to their financial well being, provide economic benefits to local businesses, and support the prosperity of the community. Participants described numerous instances where economic benefits and impacts resulted from a range of public library services and programs. This study provides an important first step in documenting those impacts, describing programs and services that support economic development, and offering strategies that policymakers and the library community might use to enhance this service role. Appendices contain service logs; patron survey; directors/managers survey; group interview questions guide; group interview survey; economic benefit survey with estimated tax statement; and economic benefit survey without estimated tax statement. (Includes 72 tables and figures. Contains 39 references.) (AEF)

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ED 449 805

# ECONOMIC BENEFITS AND IMPACTS FROM PUBLIC LIBRARIES IN THE STATE OF FLORIDA

## Final Report

To the:

**State Library of Florida**
**Division of Library and Information Services**
**Florida Department of State**
**R.A. Gray Building**
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# TABLE OF CONTENTS


| CHAPTER NUMBER | TITLE | PAGE NUMBER |
|---|---|---|
| | LIST OF TABLES | ii |
| | LIST OF FIGURES | ii |
| | ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS | vi |
| | EXECUTIVE SUMMARY | vii |
| I | INTRODUCTION | 1-1 |
| II | A PERSPECTIVE FROM THE LITERATURE | 2-1 |
| III | STUDY FINDINGS | 3-1 |
| IV | GROUP INTERVIEWS | 4-1 |
| V | PROJECT ANALYSIS AND CONCLUSIONS | 5-1 |
| VI | STUDY RECOMMENDATIONS | 6-1 |
| VII | PROPOSED STUDY TO MEASURE PUBLIC LIBRARY ECONOMIC IMPACTS | 7-1 |
| | REFERENCES | R-1 |
| | APPENDICES: | |
| | A Service Logs | |
| | B Patron Survey | |
| | C Directors/Managers Survey | |
| | D Group Interview Questions Guide | |
| | E Group Interview Survey | |
| | F Economic Benefit Survey With Estimated Tax Statement | |
| | G Economic Benefit Survey Without Estimated Tax Statement | |

## LIST OF TABLES


| TABLE NUMBER | | PAGE NUMBER |
|---|---|---|
| Table 2-1 | Miami-Dade Estimated Return on Investment 1997-98 | 2-11 |
| Table 2-2 | Miami-Dade Estimated Return on Investment 1998-99 | 2-11 |
| Table 4-1 | Location and Date of Group Interviews | 4-2 |
| Table 4-2 | Commonly Economic Benefits Cited | 4-5 |
| Table 4-3 | Examples of Economic Benefits | 4-5 |
| Table 5-1 | Possible Economic Impacts and Benefits (Local) | 5-2 |
| Table 5-2 | Possible Economic Impacts and Benefits (Business) | 5-3 |
| Table 5-3 | Possible Economic Impacts and Benefits (Personal) | 5-3 |
| Table 5-4 | Possible Economic Impacts and Benefits (Education) | 5-4 |


## LIST OF FIGURES


| FIGURE NUMBER | | PAGE NUMBER |
|---|---|---|
| Figure 3-1 | Percentage of Returned Surveys by Region and Subregion | 3-2 |
| Figure 3- 2 | Contribution of Libraries to Financial Well-Being | 3-5 |
| Figure 3-3 | Economic Benefits to Local Businesses by Libraries | 3-5 |
| Figure 3-4 | Contribution of Libraries to the Prosperity of the Local/State Community | 3-5 |
| Figure 3-5 | Frequency of Library Use by Library Patrons | 3-6 |
| Figure 3-6 | Business Related Topics | 3-6 |
| Figure 3-7 | Community Related Topics | 3-7 |
| Figure 3-8 | Technology Related Topics | 3-7 |
| Figure 3-9 | Library Related Topics | 3-8 |

## LIST OF FIGURES (continued)


| FIGURE NUMBER | | PAGE NUMBER |
|---|---|---|
| Figure 3-10 | Prosperity of Local and State Community | 3-12 |
| Figure 3-11 | Services Contributing to the Benefits of Local Business | 3-12 |
| Figure 3-12 | Contribution to User Personal Financial Well-Being | 3-12 |
| Figure 3-13 | Providing Information or Services in Employment Assistance | 3-13 |
| Figure 3-14 | Programs Offered | 3-14 |
| Figure 4-1 | Types of Participants in Group Interviews | 4-3 |
| Figure 5-1 | Education by Region | 5-5 |
| Figure 5-2 | Education by Subregion | 5-6 |
| Figure 5-3 | Education by Age Group | 5-6 |
| Figure 5-4 | Education by Gender | 5-7 |
| Figure 5-5 | Computers by Region | 5-7 |
| Figure 5-6 | Computers by Subregion | 5-8 |
| Figure 5-7 | Computers by Age Group | 5-8 |
| Figure 5-8 | Computers by Gender | 5-9 |
| Figure 5-9 | Business by Region | 5-9 |
| Figure 5-10 | Business by Subregion | 5-10 |
| Figure 5-11 | Business by Age Group | 5-10 |
| Figure 5-12 | Business by Gender | 5-11 |
| Figure 5-13 | Civic by Region | 5-11 |
| Figure 5-14 | Civic by Subregion | 5-12 |
| Figure 5-15 | Civic by Age Group | 5-12 |

## LIST OF FIGURES (continued)


| FIGURE NUMBER | | PAGE NUMBER |
|---|---|---|
| Figure 5-16 | Civic by Gender | 5-13 |
| Figure 5-17 | Job by Region | 5-13 |
| Figure 5-18 | Job by Subregion | 5-14 |
| Figure 5-19 | Job by Age Group | 5-14 |
| Figure 5-20 | Job by Gender | 5-15 |
| Figure 5-21 | Community by Region | 5-15 |
| Figure 5-22 | Community by Subregion | 5-16 |
| Figure 5-23 | Community by Age Group | 5-16 |
| Figure 5-24 | Community by Gender | 5-17 |
| Figure 5-25 | Total Income for All Responding Systems | 5-17 |
| Figure 5-26 | Total Income for Library Systems | 5-18 |
| Figure 5-27 | Per Capita Income for Systems | 5-18 |
| Figure 5-28 | Education by Income | 5-19 |
| Figure 5-29 | Education by Per Capita Income | 5-19 |
| Figure 5-30 | Computers by Income | 5-20 |
| Figure 5-31 | Computers by Per Capita Income | 5-20 |
| Figure 5-32 | Business by Income | 5-21 |
| Figure 5-33 | Business by Per Capita Income | 5-21 |
| Figure 5-34 | Civic by Income | 5-22 |
| Figure 5-35 | Civic by Per Capita Income | 5-22 |
| Figure 5-36 | Jobs by Income | 5-23 |

## LIST OF FIGURES (continued)


| FIGURE NUMBER | | PAGE NUMBER |
|---|---|---|
| Figure 5-37 | Jobs by Per Capita Income | 5-23 |
| Figure 5-38 | Community by Income | 5-24 |
| Figure 5-39 | Communit by Per Capita Income | 5-24 |
| Figure 5-40 | Funding Source 1998-1999 | 5-25 |
| Figure 5-41 | Total Library Income Per Capita Income 1996-1997 Data | 5-25 |
| Figure 5-42 | Local Income as % of Total | 5-26 |
| Figure 5-43 | Expenditures Per Capita | 5-26 |
| Figure 5-44 | Staff Expenditures Per Capita 1996-1997 | 5-26 |
| Figure 5-45 | Library Visits Per Capita 1996-1997 | 5-27 |
| Figure 5-46 | Perception of Greatest Economic Impact | 5-28 |
| Figure 7-1 | Study Framework | 7-8 |
| Figure 7-2 | Proposed Sampling Design | 7-10 |

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Numerous librarians throughout the state of Florida participated in the study via the focus groups, the statewide survey, group interviews, and follow-up phone calls made by study team personnel. While too numerous to identify individually, we greatly appreciate their taking time to participate in this effort. Were it not for their participation we could not have completed the study successfully. A number of librarians throughout the state were especially important in helping us to schedule and complete group discussions in six different sites. We especially want to acknowledge the feedback from Florida public library directors after our presentation of preliminary findings at the annual public library director's conference, October 4, 2000.

Although the principals of the study team were Charles R. McClure, Bruce T. Fraser, Timothy W. Nelson, and Jane B. Robbins, a number of other people assisted the study team in the completion of the project. Research assistants at the Information Use Management and Policy Institute included Heather Thuotte-Pierson, Gaelynn Wolf Bordonaro, Dorothy Bailey, Donisha Chamberlain, and Kori Price. They all contributed to completing the project in important ways. We also want to thank Ann Seidl for her work in visiting a number of sites throughout the state to conduct the group interviews. John Carlo Bertot at the Information Use Management and Policy Institute assisted in data analysis for which we also are appreciative. Additional thanks goes to Dr. Bruce Kingma, Associate Professor at Syracuse University, School of Information Studies, for serving as a study consultant for topics related to public sector economic theory and measurement.

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November 2000

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Study results indicate that patrons believe libraries contribute to their financial well-being, provide economic benefits to local businesses, and support the prosperity of the community. Participants described numerous instances where economic benefits and impacts resulted from a range of public library services and programs. This study provides an important first step in documenting those impacts, describing programs and services that support economic development, and offering strategies that policymakers and the library community might use to enhance this service role.

Identifying and communicating the economic value of Florida public libraries is critical to the funding, support and, ultimately, the existence of public libraries. The first step in communicating this economic value is to clearly identify and describe the economic impacts and benefits resulting to the library users and organizations as a result of their contact with the public library. Economic impact includes evidence of libraries directly or indirectly affecting the economies from which they are situated, the development or growth of the local economy, and public libraries' services contributions to the success of local businesses.

## Study Purpose and Objectives

The purpose of this study was to identify and describe the economic impacts and benefits of Florida public libraries. The study focused on economic *benefits* and *impacts* that users and organizations receive from their contacts with the library. The study identified and described economic impacts and benefits resulting from public library services and programs. The study also explored the return on investment (ROI) from public libraries. The term ROI is used in its broadest sense here and can include a range of approaches and methodologies appropriate for a public sector setting. The objectives of this study were to:

- Describe the role of public libraries in economic development;
- Identify and describe the range of specific activities and programs engaged in to support economic development;
- Identify factors that contribute to the success of involvement in economic development;
- Propose a study, based on findings reported here, to measure specific ROI from public libraries; and
- Offer recommendations and strategies for how public libraries in Florida might be more effective in supporting economic development.

Accomplishment of these objectives is an important first step in identifying and measuring economic impacts from public libraries.

## Data Collection Activities

The Institute's data collection efforts involved a multi-method approach consisting of a literature review, focus groups, a financial analysis of Florida public libraries, a statewide sample survey of public library patrons, a survey of library directors and branch managers, librarian service logs, and group interviews. The study team sent two librarian service logs to each of 12 libraries in February 2000 and conducted focus groups with library and cooperative directors at the Florida Library Association annual meeting in April 2000. The information gathered from the service logs and focus groups contributed numerous refinements to two complementary surveys distributed to public library outlet directors/mangers and patrons around the state.

In the last week of May 2000, the patron and director surveys were mailed to a random sample of 50% of the libraries in the state based on geographic region (northern, central, or southern) and metropolitan status within the region (subregions: urban, suburban, or rural). Of those 218 packets mailed throughout the state, a total of 120 survey packets were returned for a 55% response rate. Each packet contained either a response from an outlet manager or director, and/or responses from 0 to 30 patrons, for a total of 1,991 patron surveys returned. Of those 1,991 patron surveys received, 1,111 contained written responses to an open-ended question.

In addition to the patron and director surveys, six sites around the state of Florida were selected for group interviews. The group interviews were conducted from June through August 2000. These group interviews resulted in a wealth of information that describe a range of economic impacts and benefits resulting from the public library. Study team members met with public library users, local economic development and government officials, and librarians.

## Findings and Conclusions

The study team found that the economic impacts and benefits received from Florida's public libraries are numerous, varied, and complex. Study results indicated that patrons believe libraries have contributed to their financial well-being, provided economic benefits to local businesses, and supported the community. Libraries provided access to financial information, job and career resources, computer technology and services, businesses resources, educational support for the community, and support for public services.

Public library directors indicated that the library assists businesses by enabling research for a business with the incorporation process and procedure, as well as with the promotion of the use of local business. The library assists with civic involvement by supporting the democratic and political process and helping with community development. Directors also indicated the library assists patrons through the improvement of computer skills and through introducing patrons to new technologies. In addition, a variety of programs are offered such as storytime programs, technology

education programs, and recreational programs and activities. Other services with economic benefits included free tax help and forms, financial aid services via the Internet, and voter registration and election materials.

Participants in the group discussions identified a broad range of economic impacts from public library services. The most commonly cited economic benefits found in the initial dataset were: access to financial information; availability of computing technology (especially the Internet); job and career resources; business resources (particularly for small businesses); books and other formats available without cost; educational support on every level; children's programs and services; and enhancement of other public services (government and social programs).

Many library services were identified as having economic value to individual users in Florida. The cost savings to patrons from borrowing materials from the library rather than having to buy them and the availability of non-print materials such as audio books and videotapes save individuals significant expenditures. Also, periodicals and newspapers result in financial benefit to individuals. Individuals heavily use the *Value Line Investment Survey*, the *Wall Street Journal* and other financial publications. There is a dual nature to this economic benefit: first, users save the cost of purchasing these items themselves; and second, many Floridians have been better able to manage their assets as a result of this information.

Indirect economic impacts that benefit individuals in communities supported by library services are numerous. One example is in the area of career support. Individuals enhance their professional skills and increase the value of their work to their employers. Specific activities also led to indirect benefits, such as the availability of meeting rooms for service groups where monetary savings can then be put toward accomplishing the group's mission.

Local businesses benefit greatly from the role public libraries in Florida play in support of economic activities, and small businesses of every sort benefit in specific ways from local public libraries. In particular, relocating businesses, start-up businesses, and small businesses of all kinds (1-500 employees) were perceived as enjoying the greatest benefit from public library products and services. Indeed, participants noted that public libraries were listed as a reason for a business's decision to relocate to a particular community.

Several times participants reinforced the impression that library business resources were significantly more valuable in the presence of the expertise of the library staff. In other words, not only was the collection itself viewed as an important resource for area business people, but the librarian was believed by many to be a critical factor in finding, accessing and utilizing them to their fullest extent, especially with regard to electronic resources.

Several participants observed that public libraries were key factors in community development projects. Participants stated many times that the presence of a new library, or the redevelopment of an existing one, favorably impacted its immediate surroundings.

In some ways, the general economic benefit of the local community is the most important. The general impression among most participants is that the public library has clear impact on, and is an active partner in the community. Some quality of life indexes (*Best Places to Live*, *Best Places to Raise Your Children*, and *Best Places to Retire*. e.g.) use a "books per capita" statistic when profiling communities, so libraries are considered as part of the index that describes quality of life.

The community benefits when the library supports populations which are disadvantaged to some extent or another. A strong sentiment also prevailed in the value of the library to the quality of life for immigrant populations. The library provided translation of text as well as information about library services in many languages. The public library was also a focal point to assist in the assimilation of visitors and new homeowners to the area.

The use of the library to support education is another economic benefit. Patrons use library services and programs for everything from introducing their children to the joy of reading to homeschooling children. Patrons also see the use of the computers available at public libraries as an economic benefit. Computers are being used by patrons for email purposes, to gather information about a potential consumer purchase, and to gain or increase existing computer skills. This availability and use of computers at Florida's public libraries will continue to grow in importance to patrons and thereby provide an increasing economic benefit to them.

Patrons are also aware of the civic impact libraries have in their communities. Among the things libraries do to assist patrons in meeting their civic duty is offering meeting space for civic organizations, assisting in voter registration, and making tax forms available. Libraries also serve as a posting place for proposed changes in local ordinances, and other local government proposals.

It is also evident that patrons believed their jobs benefit from services available to them through their library. Libraries provide information to patrons that make them more productive on their jobs, supplied them with job related training in the area of computer skills, and have assisted patrons in finding employment. There is recognition among patrons that the library is an economic asset to the community and is a source of community pride.

The use of computers to send/write email, to gather information about a potential consumer purchase, and to gain or to increase existing computer skills is common among patrons in both high-income libraries and low-income libraries. It was evident that patrons from both high-income and low-income libraries realize how their jobs benefit from services available to them through their library. There is also recognition among patrons of both high-income and low-income libraries that the library is an asset to the community and a source of community pride.

The study found overwhelming agreement among patrons, librarians, and others, that public libraries provide economic benefits to the community; we now also have a

much richer understanding of what those benefits are. We have not yet, however, made a systematic attempt at *measuring* those benefits in a manner that is verifiable, widely applicable, and statistically defensible.

## Proposed Study

The purpose of the proposed study (see Chapter 7) is to measure the economic impacts and benefits of Florida public libraries, by focusing on the benefits and impacts that users and organizations receive from the library. Study objectives include the following:

- Describe the role of public libraries in economic development by identifying and describing key activities and programs engaged in to support economic development;
- Identify factors that contribute to the success of public library involvement in economic development;
- Refine our understanding of factors that should be considered as library-based contributions to local and state economic development and explore possible approaches and techniques to operationalize these factors so that they can be measured and quantified; and
- Offer recommendations and strategies for how public libraries in Florida might be more effective in supporting economic development.

In short, the proposed study will continue work completed to date by the study team and build upon a new study framework and pre-tested methodology using insights gained from the Information Institute's data collection and preliminary analysis.

The topics and issues described in the study reported here suggest that the general topic of measuring economic impacts and benefits of public goods such as those from public libraries resulting from taxpayer support is complex. Indeed, there is still considerable controversy surrounding the topic and how best one might proceed in conducting research in this area. Given this complexity and controversy, the study team used the following criteria as a basis for developing a proposed study framework, it should:

- Highlight factors and approaches that are most likely to be easily understood by the public library community and policymakers.
- Measure *all* types of direct and indirect economic impacts; however the study team believes that measuring those that appear to be *most important* should receive primary attention.
- Provide reliable *estimates* of such impacts.

The study proposed a framework that is feasible and practical. It can be implemented and used to produce reliable estimates of impacts, and should first concentrate on describing and understanding the following:

- Internal library factors that affect the provision of library programs and services;
- External factors that affect the provision of library programs and services; and
- Taxpayer support for the public library.

Identifying and describing these components provides a context for the library's contribution to economic impacts and benefits.

Given the estimate of economic benefits and impacts in terms of a dollar amount—at least from services and programs that provide direct impacts—the study team can then compare that dollar amount to the total taxpayer support investment in the public library for those libraries participating in the sample. The proposed study outlined in Chapter 7 will extend our knowledge regarding economic impacts and assist public libraries and state library agencies to better document the extent to which public libraries provide local and state economic impacts and benefits.

## Project Recommendations

**Increase Awareness**. Many in the public library community are aware that the library plays an important, positive role in the economy, just as it does more broadly in the community. But our work suggests this is often the exception rather than the rule. For most librarians and for members of the public as well, the economic impacts and benefits of libraries are not *conscious* factors as part of the operation, administration, or use of libraries. One particularly noteworthy exception is the effort made by the Miami-Dade Public Library System to emphasize the economic return on investment the system provides to its taxpayers.

**Need for Research.** In addition to the proposed quantitative ROI study, there are numerous other research questions related to the economic benefits from public libraries that are raised by this study. The benefit of additional research should help to discover not only a deeper understanding of the economic impact of public libraries to the economy of local and state communities, but it should also solicit the perceptions of those who do not use the programs and services of the library. These research questions are detailed in Chapter 6.

**Determine Emphasis on Economic Impacts.** In a number of instances, library staff and directors simply had not considered the degree to which the library should have goals and objectives related to promoting economic development, being engaged in services and activities that contribute to economic benefits and impacts, and measuring and reporting those economic benefits and impacts. Indeed, in one setting library staff seemed to have very differing views as to the appropriateness of the library *consciously* engaging in services and programs that had potential economic impacts. Public libraries should review their mission and plans and determine, explicitly, the degree to which they intend to provide services and programs that may result in economic impacts and benefits.

**Take Initial Practical Steps.** There are a number of initial, practical steps that public libraries can take to enhance their role in providing economic impacts and programs in their community. For example, a staff member can be appointed to spearhead planning and development efforts in this area. In addition, there are a number of very useful guides and manuals that can assist public libraries be more proactive in providing economic impacts and benefits in their local community.

**Promote Education and Training.** Another set of recommendations addresses the need to provide a range of educational activities to share these economic insights and issues through formal, ongoing training sessions and seminars. Findings from the study suggest a number of areas in which seminars, workshops, and courses might be developed. Accordingly, we recommend that the State Library of Florida, perhaps in conjunction with the state's six library cooperatives, develop training modules for use in workshops and seminars for provision around the state.

**Continue the Momentum**. To continue the momentum from this study specific initiatives need to be established.

- A first approach is to implement a strategic program of activities developed among State Library of Florida officials, public library directors, library cooperative directors, and local government officials. Given the current priorities for promoting the economic development of Florida by the Florida Secretary of State, such an initiative is likely to receive support.
- A second initiative that the State Library can develop is to encourage libraries to apply for LSTA grants in the forthcoming year that address promoting the role of the public library in economic development. It may be possible to establish this area as a priority for LSTA funding to encourage proposals that address economic development issues.
- The third initiative is to continue funding support for the research efforts that have been reported here by continuing the research. While much progress has been made, there is still much work to be done. Without such research we will not be able to move beyond the descriptive information provided in this report.

It is important to continue the momentum developed by the initial project as reported here. It is important to continue to increase the public awareness of the role of public libraries in local and statewide economic development. And it is important for public libraries to continue to extend and develop this role as the state of Florida builds and strengthens its future economy.

# CHAPTER I

# INTRODUCTION

Results from this study identified a number of indicators that public libraries do provide considerable direct and indirect economic benefits and impacts in the state of Florida. Patrons believe that public libraries contribute to their financial well being, provide economic benefits to local businesses, and support the prosperity of the community. Libraries add economic benefits throughout the state by providing access to financial information, job and career resources, information and resources for businesses, educational support for the community, and in support of other public services. Findings also suggest that some librarians place greater importance on the library's role to support economic development and benefits than do other librarians.

Identifying and accurately measuring these benefits and impacts, however, is complex. An important contribution of this study is increasing the awareness of librarians and patrons throughout the state, of the range of economic benefits and impacts that the public library provides. Nonetheless, considerable work remains to be done in refining methods and measures that can ascribe a dollar amount to these economic impacts and benefits.

Identifying and communicating the economic value of our public libraries is critical to the funding, support and, ultimately, the existence of public libraries. If we are to articulate the value of our public libraries into an accepted and identifiable dollar value, then we must first clearly identify and describe the economic impacts and benefits resulting to the library users and organizations, as a result of their contact with the public library. By developing and using techniques to collect such data, these economic impacts and benefits can be measured and offer a valid representation of the taxpayers' return on investment (ROI) for their support of public libraries.

Economic impact includes any evidence of libraries directly affecting the economies in which they are located; that public libraries are indirectly affecting the development or growth of the local economy; and that public libraries' services contribute to the success of local businesses. Economic impacts can also include the role of the library in cost avoidance—providing services that other organizations in the community do not have to provide.

The purpose of this study was to identify and describe the economic impacts and benefits of Florida public libraries. The study focuses on economic *benefits* and *impacts* that users and organizations receive from their contacts with the public library. An important aspect of the study was to define and operationalize specific types of economic impacts that result from public libraries in Florida. Through information gathered from library service logs and focus groups, along with a review of relevant literature, the study obtained information describing the economic impacts and benefits resulting to users and organizations as a result of their contact with the public library.

In addition, the study developed and tested a methodology to describe taxpayers' ROI for supporting public libraries. The term ROI is used in its broadest sense here and can include a range of approaches and methodologies that can be used in a public sector setting—cost-benefit analysis, services costing, and assumption-based costing.

The development of a methodology to describe the ROI of state taxpayer support to public libraries in the state of Florida is a complex research matter. Since the concept of ROI originates from the private sector, it must be translated and operationalized for use in the public sector. Also, while public libraries provide a broad range of impacts and benefits to residents in the state of Florida, their role in supporting economic development is not well understood or described. This study provides an important first step in documenting those impacts, describing programs and services that support economic development, and offering strategies that policymakers and the library community might use to enhance this service role.

The Information Use Management and Policy Institute at the School of Information Studies, Florida State University, began the study in January 2000 and completed it in November 2000. The objectives of this study were to:

- Describe the role of public libraries in economic development;
- Identify and describe the range of specific activities and programs engaged in to support economic development;
- Identify factors that contribute to the success of involvement in economic development; and
- Offer recommendations and strategies for how public libraries in Florida might be more effective in supporting economic development.

By accomplishing these objectives, a significant step forward has been taken in the process of better understanding how public libraries provide economic impacts and benefits to the state.

The Institute's data collection efforts involved a multi-method approach consisting of focus groups, a financial analysis, a statewide sample survey of public library patrons, a survey of library directors and branch managers, librarian service logs, and group interviews. The study team members also developed and pilot tested a methodology to describe taxpayers' ROI for supporting public libraries. The objectives for this part of the study were to:

- Develop a model that identifies factors considered as library-based contributions to local and state economic development;
- Explore possible approaches and techniques to operationalize these factors so they can be measured and quantified; and
- Pilot test the model and methodology using insights gained from the Institute's data collection and preliminary analysis.

The results of these various data collection techniques as well as study conclusions and

recommendations are presented in the remainder of this report.

The report is organized as follows. Chapter II is a literature review of efforts to establish the economic benefits and impacts of public libraries to date. In Chapter III, we provide the findings for Part 1 of this study, which includes a summary of the data collection process used for this study (librarian service logs, focus groups with library and cooperative directors, survey of patrons and directors/branch managers, and site visit focus groups) and an analysis of that data. Chapter IV reports findings from the group interviews. Chapter V presents overall study findings and conclusions. Chapter VI presents the study's recommendations. The study concludes with Chapter VII, which offers a proposed study to extend the work reported here, and develops a technique to ascribe dollar amounts of benefits from public libraries.

Overall, the study shows that public libraries make a significant contribution to the economic development of the state. Librarians and users reported numerous instances of how the public library made both direct and indirect economic impacts and benefits to their local communities. The range of these impacts and benefits are described in later chapters of this report.

# CHAPTER II

# A PERSPECTIVE FROM THE LITERATURE

The identification and communication of the economic value of our public libraries is crucial to the continued funding, support, and ultimate existence of tomorrow's public libraries. In order to translate the value of our public libraries into an accepted and identifiable dollar value, the economic impacts and benefits resulting to library users and organizations from their contact with the library must first be clearly identified and described. By using an appropriate methodology, these economic impacts and benefits can be calculated into a valid representation of the taxpayers' return on investment (ROI) for supporting public libraries.

This section offers a review of the relevant literature to establish a valid background for this study's research on the economic impacts and benefits of Florida public libraries. The review discusses the importance of the determination of the value of public libraries, the identification of benefits and impacts of public libraries, and some possible approaches and techniques utilized to operationalize the factors to measure and quantify the value of public libraries. Because developing a sound methodology to describe the ROI of state taxpayer support to public libraries is complex, an additional portion of this review addresses the conceptual underpinnings of ROI. This section concludes with a description of specific studies that have enriched this area of research.

## The Importance of Value Determination

The need to determine and communicate the value of our public library services stems from the public library funding process. Public libraries increasingly must justify the amount of public money they receive, which has led to an emphasis on quantitative assessments to provide hard evidence about the extent of the library's use. "However, this has proved somewhat double-edged primarily as it has been shown that libraries are loaning fewer books, thus undermining their assumed primary rational…. Safeguarding funding for public libraries—or at least defending them from future cuts—therefore, depends on demonstrating their value in the widest sense" (Kerslake and Kinnell, 1998, p. 162).

The hallmarks of the 1990s were fiscal restraint, specifically restructuring and identifying efficiencies of operations. The budget reductions of our public libraries are now felt in a number of areas, such as reduced materials expenditure, reduced staffing levels, and reduced service hours. These changes are occurring simultaneously with inflation and the cost burdens of new technologies (Fitch and Warner, 1998, p. 3).

In order for public libraries to counter current and future budget reductions, they must demonstrate accountability for their funding requests and status. Today, the concept of accountability is at the forefront of the public arena. "Private firms are held accountable by the public for tax benefits and incentives offered in return for private

development. Similarly, the public expects accountability from government and cultural agencies as stewards of tax revenues and local contributions. In this climate, urban public libraries also must be accountable, responsive, and effective in portraying the value of their services to taxpayers and to private-sector donors if they are to remain essential institutional components of the metropolitan infrastructure" (Holt, Elliot, Dussold, 1996, p. 2).

Many firms, economic development agencies, and some government and cultural agencies utilize economic impact studies to assemble the public support for their activities by providing specific projections of jobs, income, and future contributions to tax revenues. "In economic-impact analysis, the magnitude of an institution's impact on the regional economy is directly dependent on the extent to which it attracts new dollars to the regions" (Holt, Elliot, Moore, 1998, p. 99).

Due to the fact that public libraries can and do have an economic impact which increases and sustains local prosperity, decreases poverty for individuals and for particular areas, and ensures the survival of a range of cultural producers (Kerslake and Kinnell, 1998, p. 163), economic-impact analysis presents positive characteristics for utilization in the study of library services.

> Economic impact studies are comparative exercises which contrast economic conditions with an activity present versus regional economic conditions assuming the activity's absence. The economic benefit calculation estimates the change in regional economic indicators due to the activity. The increment in regional economic conditions is due to both the direct spending and employment associated with the activity and the indirect spending and employment that are generated as the direct spending is received as income and then re-spent in the regional economy. This magnification of the direct spending is known as the multiplier effect (Holt, Elliot, Dussold, 1996, p. 3).

However, it is important to note that in the comparison of economic conditions, an activity creates an economic impact only when new dollars flow into the region because of the activity. "Thus, economic impact occurs only when a business's or institution's activities bring outside clients to the region, thereby bringing new dollars into the region, or when an institution attracts fiscal support from outside the region for its activities" (Holt, Elliot, Dussold, 1996, p. 3). An example of this particular concept is the Art Institute of Chicago:

> The Institute inspires a certain number of visitors from outside of the region to come to Chicago. These visitors patronize Chicago's hotels, restaurants, and retail outlets as well as pay admission and membership fees and purchase items from the gift shop which augment the Institute's revenues and require greater numbers of staff members (Holt, Elliot, Dussold, 1996, p. 3).

The challenge for libraries is to find a way to prove benefits to library users, by reporting economic impact in real dollars. If the library could support this claim:

> The library's stock as a key player in economic development also would rise dramatically. The library would assume a role as an economic asset that would strengthen its traditional position as a leader in educational, cultural, and social initiatives. By developing a reliable method of measuring economic impact, the library can prove that support for its traditional initiatives contributes to economic development as well" (Ellis, 1994, p. 55).

## What Are We Measuring

Determining the value of our public library services involves quantifying various library user benefits and the impacts that result from those benefits. Ellis (1994) discusses measuring the value of public library services:

> Every service provided by a library has an outcome that makes an impact on the users of that service. Measuring the value of a library service is difficult because library service outcomes are not easy to quantify. We can measure service inputs such as materials and staff time because these are tangible costs that are easy to count. We also can measure service outputs such as materials loaned and questions answered. These tangible service transactions can be counted. The outcomes of the services provided by libraries are not easy to count in units used to measure inputs and outputs. This makes the value of library services intangible, and the impact of those services difficult to measure (p. 52).

These tangible and intangible benefits can be categorized into two distinct groups: Direct and Indirect benefits. "The term 'direct benefits' of the public library services refers to the direct value' to those who use or who have access to the library services. The term 'indirect benefits' reflects the benefits that third parties or the population as a whole derive when individuals use the services of a public institution" (Holt, Elliot, Moore, 1998, p. 99).

Many contributions of public libraries to their communities have been identified and are not in dispute. Previous research of public libraries provides a factual foundation of benefits and impacts resulting from the use of public libraries. "The role of the library in developing learning infrastructures within the community, educational institutions and work setting is significant. The role of the library service across all sectors lies in providing access to learning resources, learner support and learning administrative infrastructures" (Fisher, 1998, p. 5).

Public libraries assist local communities in supporting and encouraging our democratic society by providing citizens with accessibility to information regardless of race, income, class, age or gender. Equal information access for all is a primary component of a "smooth democratic process" (Fitch and Warner, 1998, p. 4). "Furthermore, public libraries are the primary site to locate information about and produced by the various levels of government. Governments, in turn, depend on libraries to collect and disseminate government information. As governments are increasingly making information available in electronic format only, it becomes even more important for libraries to provide electronic access to their users free of charge, so all members of the community, regardless of income bracket, will be able to find needed government information" (Fitch and Warner, 1998, p. 15).

Public libraries support and promote literacy in their community, which initiates a ripple effect of impacts from an individual's ability to apply for a job, obtain a better job and increase their income efforts. Just as important as a better job is the contribution of public libraries to the support of children and students of various grade-levels by providing informal lifelong learning resources that enriches and enhances their formal educational learning. "Investment in public libraries yields a high return to the educational health of students. Studies from around the world show that public library use is a positive factor in the attainment of high reading and comprehension levels" (Fitch and Warner, 1998, p. 4). The output of well-educated individuals from the community's school system positively impacts the local and state economy in a multitude of ways.

Not only are public libraries supporting the community's children and students in their acquisition of educational skills but libraries also support lifelong learning for all in the community. Public libraries do this by meeting the needs of individuals to become better informed for their personal decision-making and by meeting the needs of individuals wanting to upgrade their work and life skills. These needs have been recognized as being a necessity due to the fact that an individual's job skills must remain at a competitive level in the twenty-first century economy and the public library has the resources to help keep an individual's skills current (Fitch and Warner, 1998, p. 4).

The free virtual door to today's Information Highway that a public library provides the public is a valuable benefit that has the potential to offer a dramatic economic impact for the individual, the businesses, and the community as a whole. Fitch and Warner (1998) explain the importance of this benefit in greater detail:

> Statistics show that currently only those people and businesses in the higher income brackets are able to afford the hardware, software and connectivity costs required to participate in the Information Highway. However, the need for access to the Internet is not limited to people and businesses with discretionary income, and it is here that libraries are well positioned to bridge the economic gap. From individuals who might not be able to afford computer technology at home to many small and home-based businesses, the public library

> can provide the necessary connections to help prevent the division of our society into information "haves" and "have nots" (p. 19).

Libraries also serve the public by providing assistance in finding answers to many questions: where to live (demographic, geographic and real estate information), how to find and get the best (from job skills to resumes and the job interview process), what to buy (consumer information), where to travel (travel information, federal and state information), what university or college to attend, and where to find up-to-date health and legal information (Fitch and Warner, 1998, p. 5). The information that the library provides to answer some of these important library user questions can lead to significant economic benefits and impacts to the library user. In the Information Age, information resources and services are becoming everyday tools used by individuals to make the right car purchase or to market themselves for a better job opportunity.

> Frequently overlooked, however, in the consideration of the "value" of a public library are the economic benefits it provides to its own community; to the businesses that supply services to the library; to the retailers, wholesalers and publishers who sell to libraries; and to the national economy by the active promotion and support given to literacy and literacy-based programs, and indeed, to the community's culture (Fitch and Warner, 1998, p. 2).

The use and availability of library resources to everyone makes the library a valuable public good.

## Public Goods

To fully understand the concept of valuing the benefits and impacts of public libraries in terms of a return on investment, one must first understand the concept of public goods. A defining characteristic of public goods (also called collective goods) is that "these goods are not 'used up' in the process of being consumed or utilized as an input in a production process" (Oakland, 1998, p.1).

> Public goods are of particular relevance to public policy because they tend to be inefficiently provided by private arrangements such as the market mechanism. Consider first the category of public 'goods' as opposed to public "bads." Because they are not used up in the act of consumption or production, the marginal cost of extending service to additional users is zero. Private provision of the good, however, will necessitate revenues from users in order to defray the cost of producing the good. Such charges will usually lead some potential users to forego consumption, creating a deadweight efficiency loss (Oakland, 1998, p.1).

It is important to mention that from an economic perspective, public library services can exhibit characteristics of both public and private goods.

> For example, use of libraries by adults for recreational reading is a close substitute for individual purchase of books. Individual reading is private consumption and, almost exclusively, benefits the reader alone. The library serves as a means for these adults to share the costs of access to a collection of reading materials. This is very similar to adults sharing the costs of access to a municipal swimming pool for recreational swimming (Holt, Elliot, Dussold, 1996, p. 4).

The collection of resources available at the public library makes it an efficient method for distribution of the information throughout the public.

Another example of public library services demonstrating public goods characteristics would be a juvenile reader using the library, because this will:

> benefit not only the direct user, but also other members of society. A juvenile who uses library assets to become more knowledgeable and literate increases his/her future earning potential, is less likely to be unemployed, and is more likely to be an active and informed voter. In economic terms, the provided services convey not only direct benefits to the user but also "external benefits" to other members of society. Because of the rich yield of private and public benefits, society has a public interest in promoting the use of libraries by juvenile readers, an interest not easily promoted through private libraries or through profit-marketing bookstores (Holt, Elliot, Dussold, 1996, p. 5).

Due to the fact that public libraries generate external benefits and provide substitutes for private goods, the determination of the value of the benefits received by the library user is very difficult. "Benefits from substitutes for private goods can easily be estimated by determining monetary amounts which users would be willing to spend for the library services that they consume. In the past, prior to the advent of external electronic access and on-line services, even valuations of patrons' travel time to access library collections have been used to proxy the value of library benefits received" (Holt, Elliot, Dussold, 1996, p. 5).

## Cost-Benefit Approach

The cost-benefit approach to valuing library services attempts to show that the benefits derived from a service outweigh the cost of providing it. In *Placing a Value on Public Library Services*, an article that summarizes the St. Louis Public Library Services Valuation Study, Holt, Elliot, and Moore chose to utilize cost-benefit analysis to assist in

their valuation of public library services. Due to the fact that public libraries sustain the human capital that enriches a region in the long run, "cost-benefit analysis (CBA) is a more appropriate tool than economic impact analysis for measuring the benefits of the services that a library delivers in carrying out its mission" (Holt, Elliot, Moore, 1998, p.99). The researchers of this study explained that due to the fact that direct and indirect benefits flow from library services, cost-benefit analysis is the ideal tool to measure both of these benefits" (Holt, Elliot, Moore, 1998, p.102).

Fredrick Lancaster (1988) defines cost-benefit analysis as relating the benefits (outcomes) of a service to the cost of providing it, pointing out that the cost-benefit relationship is improved by increasing benefits without increasing cost, or by reducing costs without reducing benefits. In contrast to Holt, Elliot, and Moore's evaluation of the cost-benefit approach for measuring the benefits of public library services, Lancaster states the "true cost-benefit studies are virtually unattainable" in library service because "the benefits of information services are intangible and not easily expressed in the same units as the costs (e.g., $)" (Lancaster, 1988, p. 6). These conflicting views of cost-benefit analysis are important considerations in the formulation of an appropriate methodology to measure public library economic benefits and impacts.

## Return-On-Investment

In order to place a dollar value on public library services, one must understand return on investment. "The concept of return on investment (ROI) is one of those few principles that applies to just about everything in life. The essence of ROI is: did you get back more than you put in? As such, it governs every decision we make—what stock we buy, what car to drive, and whether to eat that last pint of ice cream in the freezer. As these examples suggest, what you put in and what you get back can be many things, both tangible and intangible." It is important to mention that "ROI governs only the rational decisions we make. Mathematically, ROI is represented by the following equation: Total Benefits/Total Costs" (*ROI for the rest of us*, 2000, p. 1).

Cram (1995) discussed the concept of ROI as follows:

> The present economic and political climate favors "value for money" assessments of services. What is surprising is that Return on Investment is not an aspect of libraries that are routinely incorporated in performance reporting. Yet if we consider Return on Investment, it becomes immediately apparent that it can be demonstrated that libraries are not a cost-center but a rational investment (p. 109).

ROI, in accounting terms, is the ratio of the average net income of an activity, divided by the internal investment in that activity. ROI, in terms of public libraries, demonstrates to taxpayers the value of the library services and information that the library delivers compared with the total annual budget.

> This must include the investment in the collection, in staff, and in operational costs. Resist the temptation to exclude your resources vote on the grounds of it being capital expenditure. Implementation of accrual accounting will require valuing the library collection as an asset. Exclusion of expenditure on collection from annual return-on-investment calculations could increase vulnerability to closing of libraries, realization of the assets, and outsourcing of services (Cram, 1995, p. 109).

Cram further states that:

> While documenting the return on investment of corporate and hospital libraries is relatively straightforward, public libraries represent a particular challenge. Contribution to the productivity of the local government authority may be marginal and contribution to the community not necessarily obvious. It is, however, entirely possible to demonstrate contribution to the economy of the area, together with some cost-reduction in delivering other Council services (Cram, 1995, p. 113).

## Possible Frameworks

There are a few studies that have proposed conceptual frameworks related to studying economic benefits and impacts. This section provides a brief summary of some of these studies.

One of the most cited works is *Measuring the Goodness of Library Services: A General Framework for Considering Quantitative Measures* framework by R.H. Orr. He proposes a set of relationships that can help public library directors and library science scholars understand the costs and benefits of a library system. The framework focuses on four major components: resources, capability (quality), utilization, and beneficial effects (value) (Orr, 1973, p. 315). It is important to note that within this framework resources and utilization are direct measures and can be easily quantified through measures of input cost and library services. Due to the fact that capability and beneficial effect are not direct measures, they must be assigned a value or a value must be estimated (Orr, 1973, p. 315).

*The Library's Contribution to Your Community: A Resource Manual for Libraries to Document their Social and Economic Contribution to the Local Community* (IER Planning, Research and Management Services, 1998) makes a valuable contribution to the discussion of library service impacts by identifying and categorizing the wide variety of possible impacts public libraries have on their communities. This manual discusses and highlights many potential benefits and impacts in the community. The manual's classification tool is particularly useful in communicating the library's impacts

to the public. In addition, this manual offers a systematic approach to measuring each kind of impact and then offers guidance in communicating the findings to the community. Since accountability to policymakers and taxpayers is crucial to maintaining public support, the guidance found in this publication should aid in effective communication of the benefits libraries provide, which are often not as visible to the community as they could be.

In Holt, Elliot, and Dussold's 1996 article *A Framework for Evaluating Public Investment in Urban Libraries*, the author formulates a research methodology for a better understanding and measuring of the complex benefits derived from the use of public library resources (Holt, Elliot, Dussold, 1996, p. 8). The following quotes describe some of the techniques utilized in that study's framework:

> For library services that benefit the direct user, focus groups comprising specific user groups can assist in constructing the matrix and in designing and field-testing instruments to collect necessary data. These focus groups can identify the services that they use on a regular basis and the services that they do not use. For the services that they use, what is their primary purpose—recreational, professional, or academic? Based on these responses, the researcher can design probabilistic and survey instruments for use in sample surveys of library users (Holt, Elliot, Dussold, 1996, p. 6).

> To estimate the benefits accruing to library patrons, data can be collected by sample survey of each user group. Segment the library's patron database by user group. Draw a random sample from each sub-population. To maximize response and control data collection, design the survey instrument to minimize its length and complexity for use with each sub-population. For library services that benefit only the direct user, valuation questions pertaining to the amount that groups would be willing to pay out of their own pockets for similar services elsewhere should be designed and tested in the focus groups. The values should be defined in terms of some calculable service period, such as a year. These questions can seek valuation on a function-by-function basis or an aggregate basis (Holt, Elliot, Dussold, 1996, p. 6).

Two years later Holt and his research associates implemented the framework in a study conducted on the St. Louis Public Library. Although the study was a successful application of his previous work, certain important evaluations were omitted. Due to the difficulty in measuring the indirect benefits of public library services, the researchers omitted this portion of the study and similarly, did not focus on community business benefits and impacts (Holt, Elliot, Moore, 1998, p. 99). As a result of this study, "it is now possible for St. Louis Public Library spokespersons to tell board members, city officials, civic leaders—and even economists—that the library's users are receiving more than $4 in direct benefits for every $1 of tax revenues that the public is investing annually

in the institution" (Holt, Elliot, Moore, 1998, p. 99).

Another important study is *The Economic and Job Creation Benefits of Ontario Public Libraries* by Rod Sawyer, a Public Library Consultant for the Ontario Ministry of Citizenship, Culture and Recreation (Sawyer, 1996, p. 1). This study's objective was to determine the economic impact of Ontario's public libraries on the creation of long and short-term employment. Sawyer suggests a framework that will assist public libraries in effectively promoting their important economic impacts. "This framework includes an analysis of library jobs, direct and indirect library impact on the gross domestic product (GDP), a promotion of public electronic access to information, generation of economic-oriented patron anecdotes, economic impact survey, and development of an entrepreneurial spirit in public libraries" (Sawyer, 1996, p. 1).

Lastly, in the Miami-Dade Public Library Systems annual reports, for the 1997-98 (see Table 2-1) and 1998-99 (see Table 2-2) fiscal years a return on investment information was provided demonstrating direct benefits to users. These reports describe the business of the Miami-Dade Public Library to be one of "gathering books, information and related materials, and to offer educational and culturally enriching opportunities to those residing within the Library's Taxing District" (Miami-Dade Public Library, 2000a). The reports calculate the library user's benefits by breaking down each service provided by the library and setting an average retail price for that service. The total of these calculations equal the total benefits received by the patrons. The taxpayers' investment is subtracted from the total benefits, resulting in the total return on investment. For example the Miami-Dade Public Library reports a total net return on investment of $127,485,252 for the fiscal year 1997-98, or $6.75 of benefits for every tax dollar invested (Miami-Dade Public Library, 2000a). In the 1998-99 report a total net return on investment of $129,841,508 was reported, or $6.27 of benefits for every tax dollar invested. Among notable differences between the two reports is the addition of internet access in the 1998-99 report (Miami-Dade Public Library, 2000b).

## Miami-Dade Estimated Return on Investment for Public Libraries 1997-98

| Materials and Services | Estimated Cost |
|---|---|
| 4,769,816 books and materials borrowed at an average retail price of $20 each | $95,396,320 |
| 4,045,895 books, periodicals and newspapers were used in libraries, if purchased the average retail price of each would be $10 | 40,458,950 |
| 6,237,588 reference questions answered in person by library staff, if each charge were $2 per inquiry | 12,745,176 |
| 437,578 persons attended 8,403 programs and exhibitions, if there were a $2 admission | 875,156 |
| 50,000 children and teens participated in the Mayor's Summer Reading Program, if there were a $5 registration fee | 250,000 |
| 201 literacy tutors provided 8,626 hours of one-on-one tutoring to 239 Project LEAD participants, if each charge were $25/hr | 215,000 |
| Total Benefits | $149,671,252 |
| Less Taxpayers' Investment | -22,185,960 |
| Total Return on Investment | $127,485,292 |

Table 2-1

## Miami-Dade Estimated Return on Investment for Public Libraries 1998-99

| Materials and Services | Estimated Cost |
|---|---|
| 4,751,514 books and materials borrowed at an average retail price of $20 each | $95,030,280 |
| 4,614,903 books, periodicals and newspapers were used in libraries, if purchased the average retail price of each would be $10 | 46,149,030 |
| 5,435,095 reference questions answered in person by library staff, if each charge were $2 per inquiry | 10,870,190 |
| 625,292 internet sessions (45 minutes per session) at a $2 per session access fee. | 1,250,584 |
| 420,581 persons attended 8,546 programs and exhibitions, if there were a $2 admission | 841,162 |
| 19,000 children and teens participated in the Mayor's Summer Reading Program, if there were a $5 registration fee | 95,000 |
| 279 literacy tutors provided 10,015 hours of one-on-one tutoring to 239 Project LEAD participants, if each charge were $25/hr | 250,375 |
| Total Benefits | $154,486,621 |
| Less Taxpayers' Investment | -24,645,113 |
| Total Return on Investment | $129,841,508 |

Table 2-2

## Complexity of the Topic

After reviewing the relevant literature related to economic benefits and impacts that our public libraries provide to the community, it is apparent that further research in this area is needed. This study addresses identifying and describing the economic impacts and benefits of Florida public libraries and will develop and test a methodology that will describe the taxpayers' return on investment for supporting their public libraries.

An important area of investigation that has been lacking in previous studies, the determination of the value of indirect benefits received by patrons, will be a primary portion of this study. Additionally unlike previous works, this study will concentrate on the economic benefits and impacts that are received by local/state businesses.

By providing a thorough and complete study, our knowledge about the following topics will be enhanced and expanded:

1) How public libraries in Florida contribute to the economy of the local community and the state.
2) The degree to which public librarians see economic development as an important goal for their libraries.
3) Specific programs and services that have been developed by libraries that are directly and indirectly supporting economic development.
4) And most importantly, a better understanding of public libraries role in economic development and support.

The few efforts to determine the answer to these topics indicate that economic benefits and impacts are difficult to measure. Determining economic benefits and impacts is a complex matter that requires data collection through a variety of means, and sophisticated analysis using well-understood assumptions.

# CHAPTER III

# STUDY FINDINGS

## Introduction

During the year 2000, the Information Use Management and Policy Institute investigated the economic impacts and benefits of Florida public libraries for the State Library of Florida. Working with a team of economists, the study team also developed and pilot-tested a methodology to describe taxpayers' return on investment (ROI) for supporting public libraries. The objectives for this part of the study were to: (a) develop a model that identifies factors that should be considered as library-based contributions to local and state economic development; (b) explore possible approaches and techniques to operationalize these factors so that they can be measured and quantified; and (c) pilot test the model and methodology using insights gained from the Institute's data collection and preliminary analysis.

The Institute's data collection efforts involved a multi-method approach consisting of focus groups, a financial analysis, a statewide sample survey of public library patrons, a survey of library directors and branch managers, librarian service logs, and site visits. The librarian service logs (see Appendix A for copy of service logs), as arranged by the State Library, were sent to 12 libraries in February 2000, and in May 2000 patron surveys (see Appendix B for copy of patron survey) and director/branch manager surveys (see Appendix C for copy of directors survey) were sent to 218, or 50 percent of the libraries in the state. The group interviews (see Appendix D for copy of interview questions) were conducted at six geographic locations across the state from June through August 2000.

The next section of this report summarizes the data collection process, and provides an analysis of the focus groups, the library patrons and directors surveys; and librarian service logs. Chapter IV reports on the results of the group interviews.

## Data Collection Strategy and Preliminary Findings

Concurrently with the development of statewide user and director surveys used in this study, the study team sent two librarian service logs to each of 12 libraries in February 2000, and conducted focus groups with library and cooperative directors at the Florida Library Association annual meeting in April 2000. The information gathered from the service logs and focus groups, along with a thorough review of relevant literature, and the pretesting of the surveys at the final stages of development, contributed numerous refinements to two complementary surveys distributed to public library outlet directors/mangers and patrons around the state.

In the last week of May 2000, the user and director surveys were mailed to a random sample of 50% of the libraries in the state based on geographic region (northern, central, or southern) and metropolitan status (subregions: urban, suburban, or rural).

From information provided by the State Library, the Information Institute identified a total of 436 public library outlets in the state as potential recipients of survey packets (in which each packet contained one survey designed for the outlet director or manager, and 30 copies of blank surveys designed for patrons).

Based on random sampling criteria, which led to the selection of 50% of outlets in each of nine categories (e.g., northern-urban, northern-suburban, northern-rural, central-urban, etc.), the study team sent to a total of 218 libraries a survey packet that also included directions for completing and administering the surveys. Of those 218 packets mailed throughout the state, a total of 120 survey packets were returned for a 55% response rate. Each packet contained either a response from an outlet manager or director, and/or from 0 to 30 patron responses. A total of 1,991 patron surveys were returned. Of those 1,991 patron surveys received, 1,111 contained written responses to the open-ended question, which were hand-keyed in a database and analyzed below (see Figure 3-1). These responses ranged from short comments such as, "God bless this library," to long responses expressing specific benefits received from use of the library. Also, of the 1,991 surveys received, 35 could not be used for scanning bubbled choices due to factors such as items not being selected properly or the sheets being damaged.

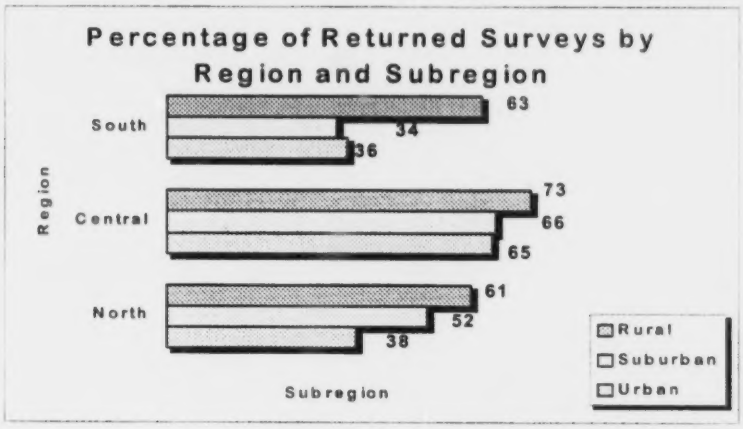


**Figure 3-1**

Six targeted site visits/focus groups with patrons and economic development officers were conducted:

- St. Augustine (St. Johns County Public Library System) on June 30, 2000;
- Gainesville (Alachua County Library District) on July 13, 2000;
- Panama City (Northwest Regional Library District) on July 14, 2000;
- Clearwater (Pinellas Public Library Cooperative) on August 17, 2000;
- Palm Springs (Palm Springs Public Library) on August 18, 2000; and
- Ft. Myers (Ft. Myers – Lee County Public Library) on August 19, 2000.

The results of these interviews produced insights from patrons and confirmed information gathered from the surveys, with participants expressing that the availability of programs

and services have an economic value to individual users, as does the use of financial information to manage investments. Additionally, participants were able to place values on some library services they enjoy.

The remainder of this section contains analyses of the various types of data collected and reviewed for the development of the survey pilot tested and included in the proposed methodology.

## Librarian Service Logs

The service logs were developed from two sources: critical incidents reported in the Public Library Use in Pennsylvania study (McClure and Bertot 1998); and economic impacts from public library use found in the literature review for this study. As prearranged with the assistance of the State Library of Florida, the economic impact logs were sent to 12 selected library directors for administration by each of two of their respective librarians (see Appendix A, for copy of service log). Two blank logs were sent to each director, each log having space for 10 items, for a total of 24 logs with space for 240 items. Twenty-two logs were returned with 186 items (critical incidents) identified. A coder reviewed the logs and each incident was recorded in the most appropriate category.

Findings from the service logs gave rise to a list of library services that have the potential to result in economic benefits. Key categories for such services include: **increasing the prosperity of the local or state economy** (e.g., support of local cultures and arts, or community outreach programs)**; increasing the profitability of an individual local business** (e.g., legal information/resources, or small business tax information); and **increasing the well-being of an individual's personal finances** (e.g., investment information or career planning resources).

## Focus Groups with Library and Cooperative Directors

To assist in the development of survey questionnaires, the study team conducted focus groups with library and cooperative directors at the Florida Library Association meeting in Tampa in late April 2000. These groups revealed some suggestions and insights into what relevant activities are ongoing at libraries in the state. For example, one participant emphasized that there has been a significant rise in instances of employers sending new employees to the library to obtain or update technical computer skills. This and the following insights aided the study team in refining the statewide survey questionnaires.

Some participants reported that adult literacy programs are important programs in specific libraries, preparing students with critical skills for the job market. As an example, Pinellas County indicated having the Deaf Literacy Center, where deaf patrons/students are taught reading and writing. Additionally, the St. Petersburg Public

Library developed an adult literacy program to teach English to immigrants. Others suggested the need for libraries to develop career centers to assist library users in finding employment or career enrichment.

It was also noted that when a business considers locating in a community they refer to the community's school system and library system. An example of corporate interest in libraries that concerned Tampa in the early 1950s was noted, when the Ford Corporation withdrew plans to locate in Tampa due in part to a lack of support and construction of new public libraries in the community.

Another participant noted that libraries also act as central information resource centers. For instance, in Orlando the county library is located in the public library. Also, the Clearwater library established an Answer Center that researches questions that could not be answered at branch libraries, with a large number of these questions being business-related questions. To this end it was suggested that libraries might need a staff person just to handle business-related questions and issues and that this person could also aid in minority business resource sharing.

Other interesting comments include noting the heavy use of public libraries by winter visitors. Finally, it was also suggested that business CEOs be surveyed regarding the impacts and benefits they perceive that the business community and individuals receive from public libraries.

## Patron and Director Surveys

The analysis presented in this report provides key findings of significance and examples of the types of analysis possible through the surveys conducted as part of this study. Additional analysis includes topics by library region (north, central, and south), subregion library metropolitan status designation (urban, rural, suburban), age group (18-35, 36-55, and 56 and up), and gender (male, female).

### Statewide Sample Survey of Patrons

The survey developed by the Institute to collect patron information sought background information such as age, gender, level of education, and opinion on the presence and economic impact of the library on the community (see Figures 3-2 through 3-5). The survey also solicited patrons' responses regarding areas that the library has assisted them through the provision of information or services benefiting them economically. The categories of such information and services included: personal, job, education, civic, local business, computers, and miscellaneous. Also, an open-ended question at the end of the survey asked patrons to comment on the two most important economic benefits received personally from the library.

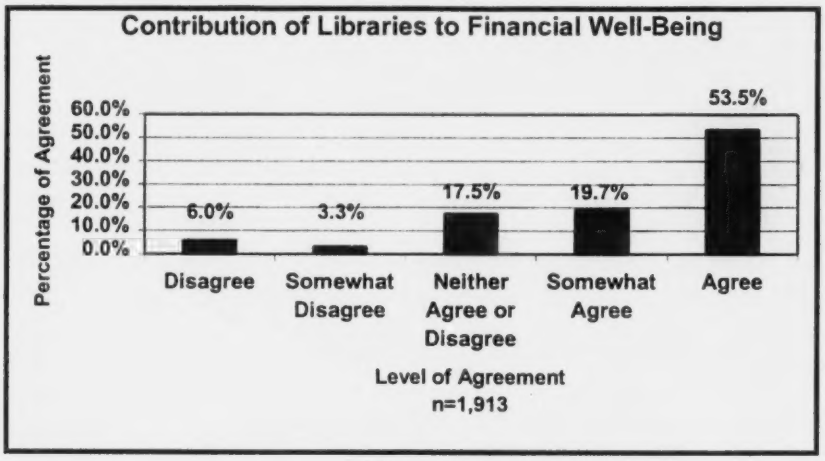


Figure 3-2

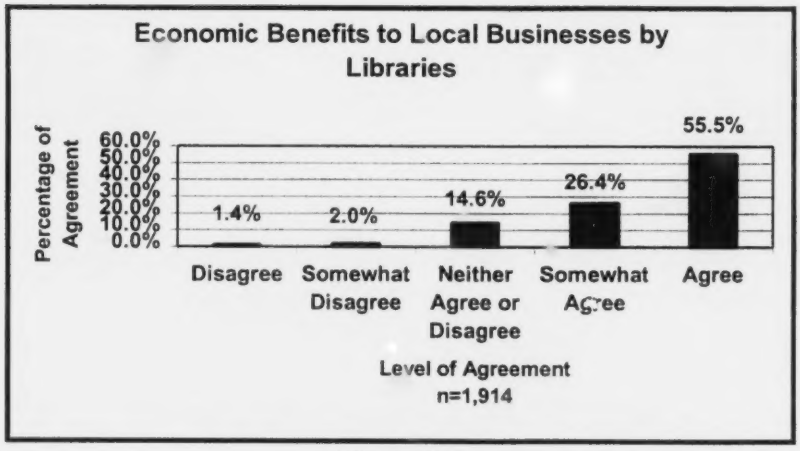


Figure 3-3

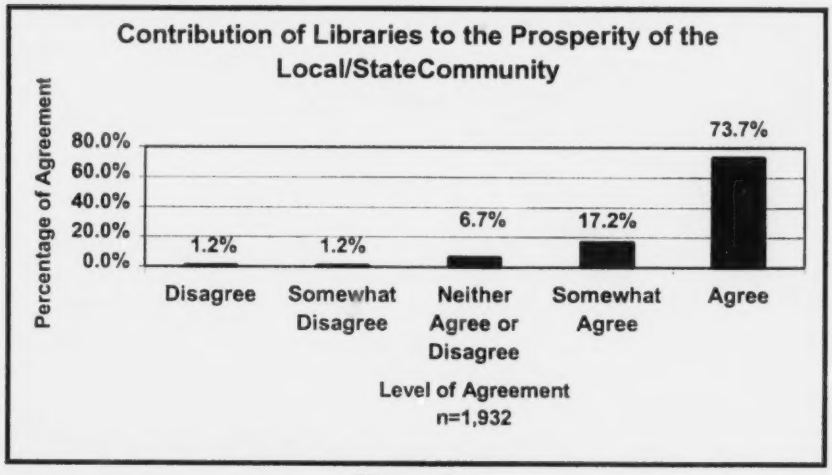


Figure 3-4

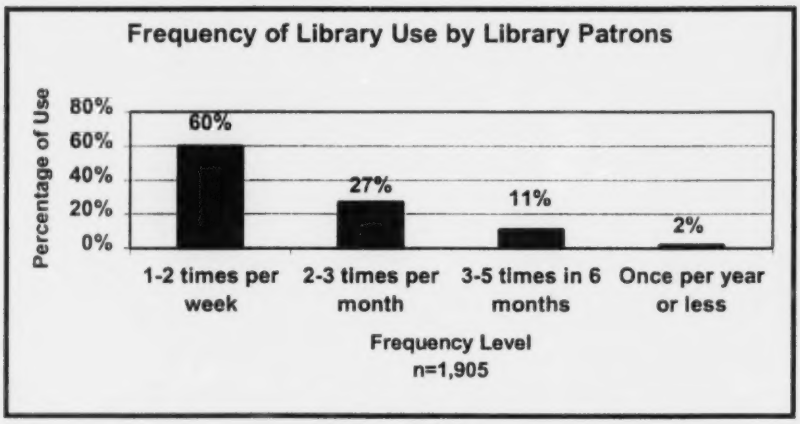


**Figure 3-5**

The findings provide information on how patrons have benefited from using library programs and services, and how they personally feel about the library itself (see Appendix B, for copy of patron survey). Patrons indicated that the library attracts patronage to local businesses, attracts new businesses to the community, and that resources available at the library made them more productive on their job. Also, patrons felt that the library increases local property values, assists with issues concerning community development, and supports community agencies (see Figures 3-6 and 3-7).

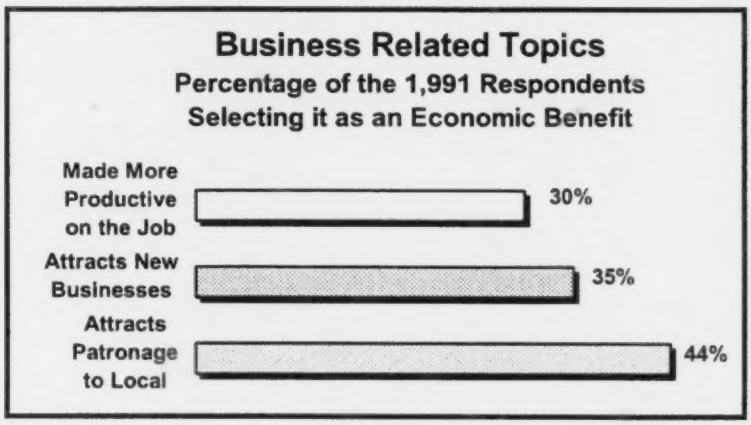


**Figure 3-6**

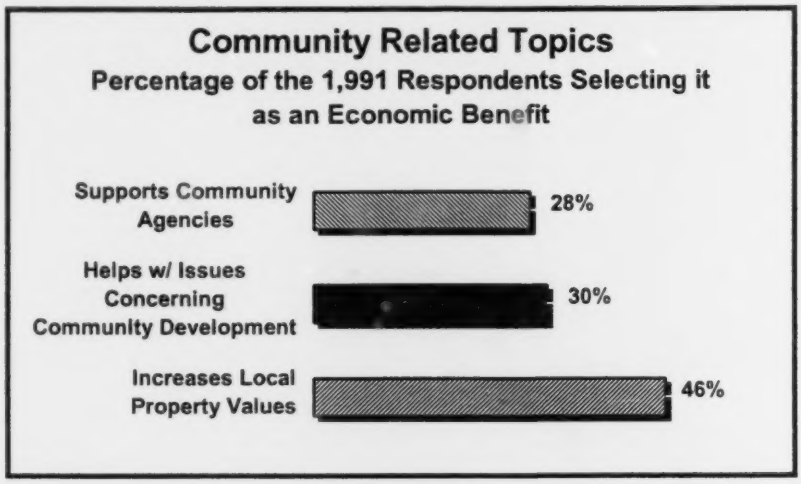


**Figure 3-7**

Computers and the Internet also were often selected as benefits patrons received from their library. Respondents indicated that the library helped them gain or improve their computer skills, introduced them to new technologies such as the Internet through programs and services, and encouraged them to get their own Internet account from an Internet service provider.

Patrons indicated strong feelings about the library itself, expressing that the library improves the overall quality of life, provides critical information such as legal and health. Also, patrons stated that the library facilitates life-long learning or contributes to learning and education outside a formal classroom setting, and supplies them with information they could not have obtained elsewhere (see Figures 3-8 and 3-9).

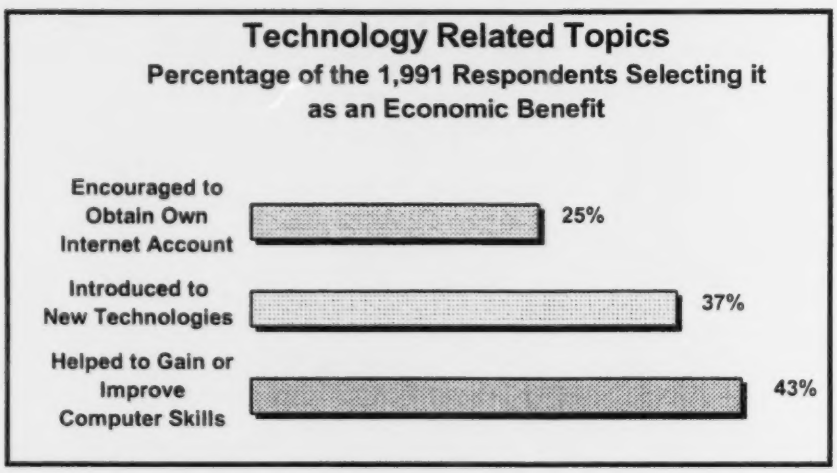
Technology Related Topics
Percentage of the 1,991 Respondents Selecting it as an Economic Benefit
Encouraged to Obtain Own Internet Account
25%
Introduced to New Technologies
37%
Helped to Gain or Improve Computer Skills
43%

**Figure 3-8**

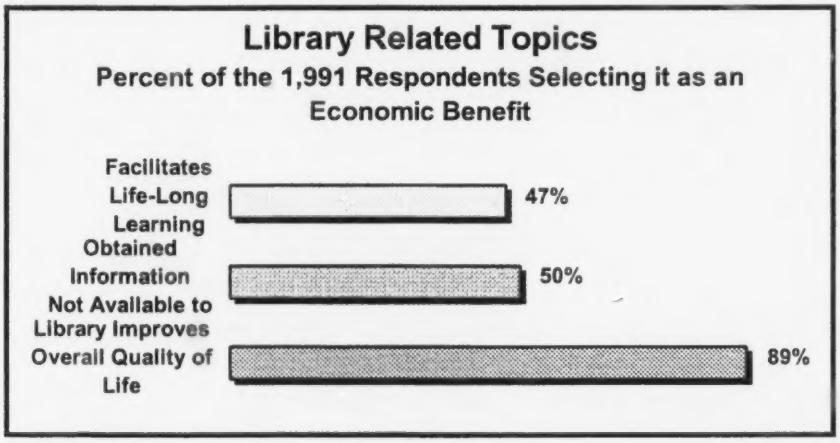
Library Related Topics
Percent of the 1,991 Respondents Selecting it as an Economic Benefit
Facilitates Life-Long Learning
47%
Obtained Information Not Available to Library Improves Overall Quality of Life
50%
89%

**Figure 3-9**

The open-ended questions were hand keyed into a database by the study team. A review of the open-ended question responses revealed a pattern of various general comments that appeared at least several times in the surveys. For instance, of the written responses, 491 commented on the availability of books, magazines, and newspapers; 269 cited the availability of the Internet and e-mail; and 81 commented on the availability of videos. A short discussion of some of those comments follows.

Many patrons reported receiving assistance from libraries in obtaining information for self-help, or for how-to projects. Such assistance includes doing research on legal matters (e.g., estate planning), thus saving these patrons some expenses on attorney fees. Patrons also use library resources to obtain information for budgeting their money and exploring their hobbies. They commented on using the resources available to help them with home improvement projects, auto repair, and gardening. Libraries have helped patrons prepare for the GED, learn a second language, obtain tax information, and find information on Florida wildlife. Comments included:

- "Information obtained from reference books replaced or saved many hours and dollars in attorney fees."
- "Information on how-to fix my water pump on my 1986 Volvo, saved me dollars in labor and parts."
- "Gardening and home repair—I was able to save money getting information and doing work myself."

Some patrons reported that an increase in computer literacy was obtained, such as learning how to type and use new software programs. Among such categories mentioned were new technical knowledge, Internet use, Web page design, and how to reach government agencies via the Internet. Comments included:

- "My motel attracts people wanting to use the library during their stay—Internet and references."
- "Libraries are critical to the economic and educational well-being of the community by alleviating the 'digital divide'."
- "Learning how to navigate the Internet through classes."

Patrons also use the libraries services to enhance their investment knowledge, such as using the Internet to access financial information on companies, or using reference materials and periodicals such as various Standard and Poor's publications, *Barron's*, the *Wall Street Journal*, *Value Line Investment Survey*, etc. In addition, information is being obtained on how to invest and what to invest in (e.g., such stocks, bonds, and IRAs). Comments included:

- "Gained access to information regarding investing in mutual funds."
- "Access to Value Line and the financial 'database' have kept me from buying poor stocks touted by brokers."

Libraries are being used to assist in the search for employment. Patrons use the Internet to search for jobs in the community (e.g., using job lines) and for relocating. Internet and reference materials are being used to develop resumes and to locate headhunters. Some even received job offers due to their contact with the library. Libraries have assisted patrons in obtaining jobs with the Census Bureau, as well as assisting the Census Bureau in meeting their objectives. Comments included:

- "Job search—I've been using the Internet looking for work, and for researching about starting my own business."
- "Used the computers to update my resume and it has helped me in my job search."

Patrons use libraries to assist in their travel plans, using the Internet and other resources to contact airlines and plan vacations. Libraries are also being used to assist patrons in consumer purchases such as finding an apartment and rental pricing information. Patrons use services to save money on computer purchases, movie and cassette rentals, or to review books before buying them. Comments included:

- "As new members of the community we needed advice about building and planting, water use, etc."
- "My library has assisted me with materials relating to work, health, and travel, all of which have made me better able to do my job, and support my family."
- "Prepared me to visit a foreign country—monetary exchanges, languages, costs, etc."

Patrons report being able to obtain information concerning health issues (advice and general information), personal fitness, cooking, education, scholarship assistance,

homeschooling, and college preparatory information (practice tests such as for the SAT). Comments included:

- "The libraries of the US are one of the main reasons that the country is where it is today, it provides an avenue for education which has helped to bring prosperity and enhance life for all that take advantage of the many benefits that the library provides."
- "I home school four children, the library has more books than I could afford."
- "It has increased the value of our education system here by having a place where our children can go for further research."
- "This library has given my children and myself a place to come to learn together."

In addition, patrons are use libraries to research consumer information for comparison-shopping on products such as cars, boats, and refrigerators. They use the resources available to research house plans, real estate information, and consumer rights. Patrons also reported making use of the children's programs available such as storytime, and seeing the library as safe places for children to go for such activities, especially after school. Comments included:

- "Found specific information (drawings, plans, etc.) for my woodwork shop."
- "I was able to look through various books of house plans without having to purchase any to find just the right floor plan."
- "I used the library's resources to buy a new car. I comparison shopped on the Internet, and found out how much my car was worth for a trade-in."
- "Information that I have received at the library has enabled me to save money on things like major purchases, and home repairs and improvements."

The survey also indicated how patrons feel about the library in their community. Comments included:

- "Without a good library in a city most industries would look somewhere else. Everyone should know that a good library offers enjoyment and growth."
- "A good library is essential to a community."
- "Nowhere do you get more from your tax dollar than at the libraries."
- "Improves the overall quality of life and atmosphere in the community."
- "Increase the value of my property by making ours an attractive

community."

- "I would miss this library more than almost any service provided by the county if it were not here."
- "Any community without access to a library is greatly short changed, and without access to information to form thoughts and ideas."

## Library Director/Branch Manager Survey

The survey developed by the Institute to collect directors'/managers' perspectives was sent to 218 (or 50%) of the states' 436 libraries, and 120 were returned for a 55% response rate. The survey first sought background information such as name of director and contact person, the population service area of the library or system, annual total operating budget for the library or system, and the number of hours the library outlet is open to the public per week.

Respondents were then given choices concerning library services and were asked to indicate all of the library services that they felt had contributed to the prosperity of the local/state community, to local businesses in economically beneficial ways, and to patrons' personal financial well-being. The respondents were then asked to indicate whether the library assisted in providing information or services that aided patrons in gaining employment, aided local business, contributed to civic involvement, supported personal education, made the use of computers available, and other miscellaneous areas.

In addition, respondents were asked to indicate from a list of programs and services, the programs and services that are offered at their library. The survey also provided space for respondents to list other areas of assistance under each of these categories. Finally, the survey provided an open-ended space for respondents to indicate the ways in which they promote library programs and services.

Of the 120 survey packets returned, eight included system information that covered libraries within the same system leaving a total of 112 to be used for the survey analysis. The findings from these 112 surveys reveal information on how directors/managers feel the library contributes to the local/state community, to local businesses, and to patrons from the use of the library's programs and services (see Appendix C for copy of directors survey). These directors/managers saw the library as contributing to the prosperity of the local/state community; see the library as an educational facility; the library as supporting local culture and arts; and as a safe place for children after-school. They further report the library supporting local business by making available the use of a lecture hall for small business education opportunities, the posting of local jobs, and providing business related programs and workshops (see Figures 3-10 and 3-11).

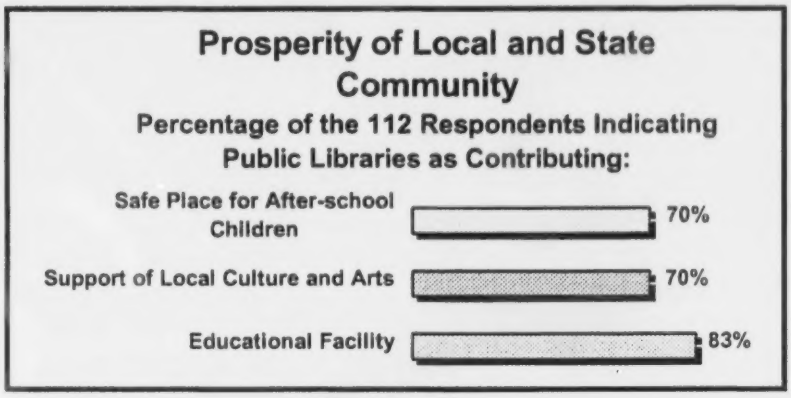
Prosperity of Local and State Community
Percentage of the 112 Respondents Indicating Public Libraries as Contributing:
Safe Place for After-school Children
70%
Support of Local Culture and Arts
70%
Educational Facility
83%

**Figure 3-10**

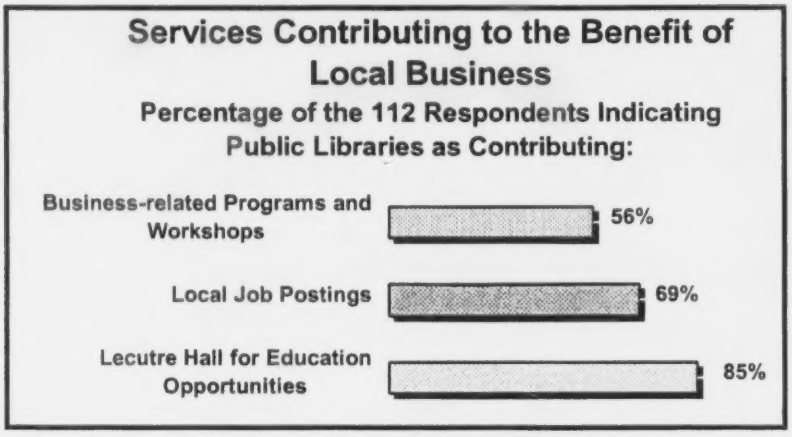
Services Contributing to the Benefit of Local Business
Percentage of the 112 Respondents Indicating Public Libraries as Contributing:
Business-related Programs and Workshops
56%
Local Job Postings
69%
Lecutre Hall for Education Opportunities
85%

**Figure 3-11**

Directors/managers also felt the library contributes to users well-being by providing patrons with information necessary for the purchase or sale of a car or boat, information on income tax preparation, and information on investments or business ventures. Also listed were the availability of health and legal information, and access to government agencies and resources (see Figure 3-12).

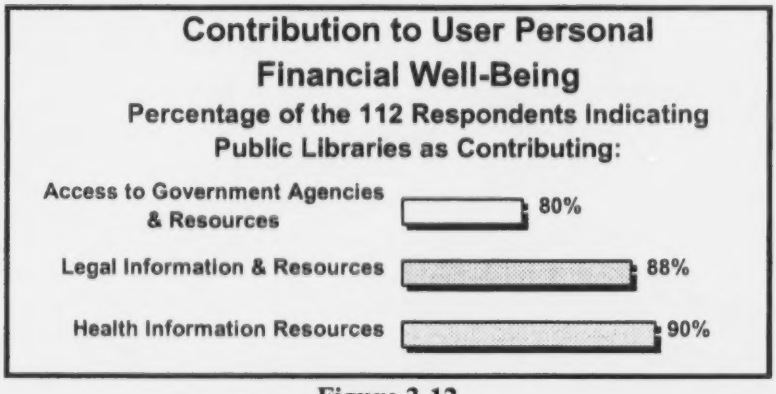
Contribution to User Personal Financial Well-Being
Percentage of the 112 Respondents Indicating Public Libraries as Contributing:
Access to Government Agencies & Resources
80%
Legal Information & Resources
88%
Health Information Resources
90%

**Figure 3-12**

In the providing of information or services directors/managers indicated that the library assists patrons in the area of employment by helping users with a job search, improving an existing business, and assisting users in being more productive on their job. They further indicated that the library assists businesses by enabling research for a business and with the incorporation process and procedure, as well as with the promotion of the use of local business.

Directors/managers also indicated the library assists with civic involvement by supporting the democratic and political process, and help with community development. Furthering the library contributes to personal education, the providing of early childhood learning experiences, improves literacy, and helps patrons plan for college.

In addition, directors/managers indicated the library assists patrons through the improvement of computer skills and introduces patrons to new technologies. Miscellaneous items listed included assistance with legal problems, supplying information that helps patrons understand a medical condition or diagnosis, and information assisting them with a consumer decision (see Figure 3-13).

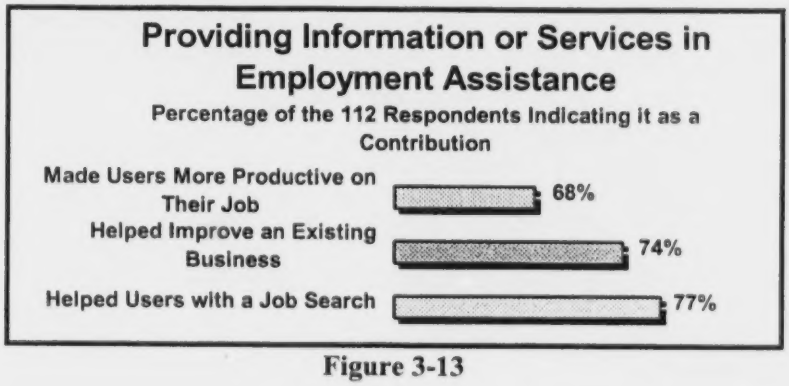
Providing Information or Services in Employment Assistance
Percentage of the 112 Respondents Indicating it as a Contribution
Made Users More Productive on Their Job
68%
Helped Improve an Existing Business
74%
Helped Users with a Job Search
77%

**Figure 3-13**

Directors/managers also indicated a variety of programs that libraries offer such as storytime programs, technology education programs, and recreational programs and activities. Services offered include free tax help and forms, financial aid services via the Internet, and voter registration and election materials (see Figure 3-14).

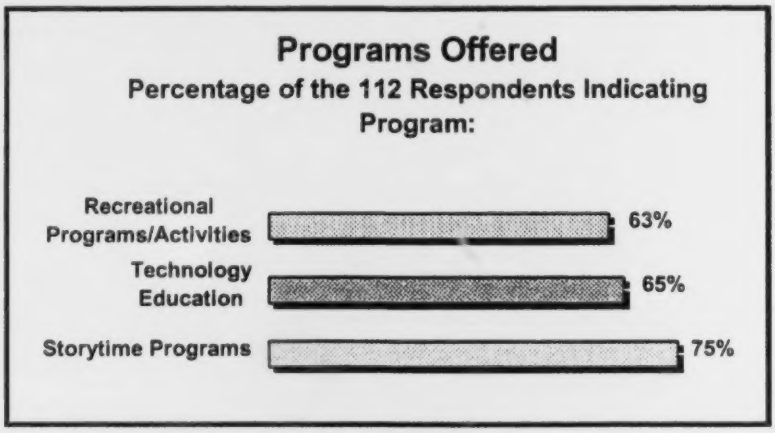


**Figure 3-14**

Respondents also listed several other areas of assistance under each of these categories. The following summarizes the information provided from each of the categories for each question and how the libraries promote programs and services:

- Question number eight asked respondents to indicate the library services they felt had contributed to the prosperity of the local/state community. Respondents noted children's services, providing information on setting up and running a small business, recreational information, and legal research. Also mentioned were public access to computers, computer training and literacy services, and Internet access for patrons.
- Question number nine asked respondents to indicate the library services that have been economically beneficial to local businesses. Three items noted were computer training, Internet access, and meeting room space.
- Question number ten asked respondents to indicate the library services that have contributed to user personal financial well-being. Some services mentioned were word-processing access, computer training, grant-writing information, and test preparation guides. Also noted were a Spanish language collection, meeting rooms for groups, seminars and tax assistance workshops, and income tax assistance through VITA.
- Question number eleven asked respondents about assistance the library had provided either through information or services concerning employment, local business, civic involvement, education, computers, personal, and miscellaneous areas. Some respondents noted Internet classes, computers, providing of email services, and involvement in school readiness programs. Also included were assistance to local clubs, IRS assistance, classes to learn a foreign language, the library as

a safe place for kids, a social outlet for seniors, and books by mail for the homebound.

- Question number twelve had respondents focus on the presence of the library in the community. Some items listed were improved educational opportunities, free computer classes, the library as a cultural center, and the promotion of a healthy environment and values for children. It was also indicated that the library is a factor for people selecting the community for a place to live, establishing a business, or attracting new housing developments. Moreover, the library was cited as a matter of town pride.

- Question number thirteen allowed respondents to indicate the programs offered at each library. Some programs mentioned were weekend craft programs for children, cultural awareness programs, services for the disabled and the homebound, tutoring for English language programs, and summer reading programs. Activities listed were book discussions, local history programs, displays and exhibits, meet-the-artist programs, and guest speaker programs. Other activities included discussions and/or seminars on travel, gardening, creative writing, photography, and medical and financial issues. Times were also set aside for babies under 24 months, toddlers 24-36 months, children's programs, and teens. Classes or workshops on estate planning, health, sign language, crafts, foreign language, home buying, and job hunting were also provided by libraries.

- Question number fourteen asked respondents to indicate the services their library offers. Some services mentioned include books on tape, access to Florida legal services via computer, and space for AARP tax volunteers, census workers, extension service, and income tax assistance. Other services offered include notary services, financial and health related programs, Florida authors program, the library as a polling location, provision of passport/birth/death record information, tutoring for children, fax and copying services, a book-review series, a homebound book service, and a variety of children's services.

- Question number fifteen asked respondents to list the ways that they promote library programs and services. It was reported that library programs are promoted through newspaper advertisements and articles, radio and television announcements, presentations to local civic groups, and posters and brochures inside the library and throughout the community. Also, services are promoted through presentations to local schools and daycare centers, at local parades and festivals, and by outreach to local businesses. Libraries also network with organizations such as the Chamber of Commerce, churches, neighborhood associations, and state and regional agencies such as the Red Cross.

In addition to the patron and director surveys, six sites around the state of Florida were selected to conduct group interviews. The group interviews were conducted from June 2000 through August 2000. Information from the group interviews provided insight into the nature of the economic benefits of public libraries and supports the assumption that libraries in Florida economically impact the communities they serve. The report on the data gathered from these interviews is found in Chapter IV.

# CHAPTER IV

# GROUP INTERVIEWS

## Introduction

In addition to the previously described methods of data collection, the study team conducted targeted group interviews in selected locations throughout the state. These group interviews resulted in a wealth of information describing a range of economic impacts and benefits due to use of the public library. Study team members met with:

- Public library users, to identify the services used in the library that may have resulted in economic impacts.
- Local economic development officials and government officials, to determine their use of the library and the degree to which such use has benefited local economic development.
- Librarians, to identify and describe programs and services targeted to support economic development.

The study team worked closely with state library staff and local library directors to arrange for meetings at their locations. The study team selected this approach because the group interview method is useful for explaining reasons behind interviewees' attitudes, feelings, and behaviors. Consensus is not usually the aim of group interviews and in our attempt to quantify the extent to which opinions are held in the group may not be the intent sought by researchers; instead, the process generates information that increases understanding of complex issues from multiple perspectives (Zweizig, et al. 1994, p. 161-2).

The study team used the group interviews to expand the understanding of the survey results, to add depth and meaning to the data collection, and to capture selected residents' feelings, impressions, experience, and perceptions about the economic benefits of public libraries.

Overall, the group interviews, which were conducted from June through August 2000, were very successful. The data provided useful insights into the nature of economic benefits of public libraries and they support the conclusion that public libraries in Florida economically impact the communities they serve in multiple ways.

## Methodology

### Site Selection

Six sites around the state of Florida were selected for group interviews. The study team discussed potential sites with Library Program Specialists at the State Library of Florida, who provided insight as well as specific contacts for site selection. The

preliminary results of the state survey, the focus group discussions held at the Florida Library Association in April 2000, and the librarian service logs also informed the selection process. These preliminary findings served as baseline data, assisted in developing the interview guides and led in many cases to contacts at the final site selection phase.

The study team used the following criteria when considering potential sites for interviews:

- Exceptional responsiveness to the statewide survey and librarian service log collection;
- Representative of geographic distribution around the state of Florida;
- Knowledge and support of the objectives of this study;
- Willingness and availability of library staff and directors to participate; and
- Provider of different kinds of library services.

Based on these criteria, as well as preliminary study findings, the study team selected the sites to participate in the study.

A range of library types (library cooperatives, small public libraries, larger public library systems with branches) participated in the group interviews. Demographic data, including income and economic, were gathered at the sites, as well as library statistics and area information. The economic strength and weakness of library communities that participated in the group interviews also varied considerably.

## Library Recruitment

The state librarian encouraged participation in the group interviews via a number of email messages. Once a short list of potential sites was complete, a list of potential Florida library contacts and related personnel was compiled. Directors were generally approached by telephone and email. In one case a library director agreed to host a group interview after meeting with a team member at the ALA Annual Conference in Chicago. The study team communicated the goals and objectives of the study and asked for each of the libraries' participation. If a library agreed to participate, a date was scheduled for the group interview and a meeting room at the location was reserved for the interview. Table 4-1 shows the final selection of participating libraries, cities of location, and date of group interview.

| Name of Location | City | Date of Interview |
|---|---|---|
| St. Johns County Public Library System | St. Augustine, FL | June 30, 2000 |
| Alachua County Library District | Gainesville, FL | July 13, 2000 |
| Northwest Regional Library District | Panama City, FL | July 14, 2000 |
| Pinellas Public Library Cooperative | Clearwater, FL | August 17, 2000 |
| Palm Springs Public Library | Palm Springs, FL | August 18, 2000 |
| Ft. Myers - Lee County Public Library | Ft. Myers, FL | August 19, 2000 |

**Table 4-1**

## Participant Recruitment

The study team or local library staff contacted local participants such as chambers of commerce officials, economic development officers, city or county government representatives, civic organization representatives, and library staff. Individual users were asked by circulation or reference staff to sign up on an information sheet provided to the participating library, or was recruited on site. Not every group was represented at every interview, but a good blend was achieved overall (see Figure 4-1, Type of Participants). In total, 41 people at the six locations participated in the interviews (6 at St. Johns, 7 at Alachua, 7 at Northwest Regional, 6 at Pinellas, 10 at Palm Springs, and 5 at Ft. Myers).

Of the 41 participants, 21 were men, 20 were women. Specific demographic information of participants such as age, martial status, parental status or ethnic background was not collected. One participant was visibly living with a disability.

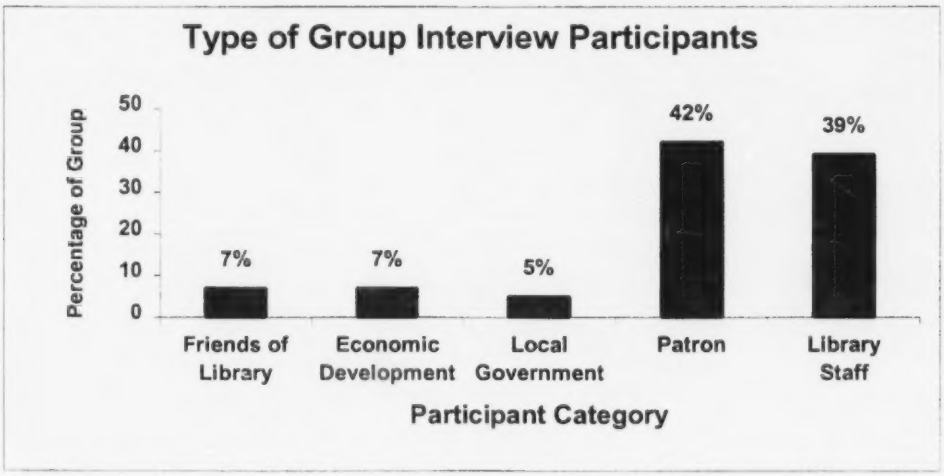


**Figure 4-1**

## The Group Interviews

Participants spoke frankly and thoughtfully about the issues they were being asked to consider and commented on one another's perspectives and opinions, replying, responding to, and broadening the discussion in natural and organic ways. Each group interview was unique. The order of the topics to be discussed from the interview guide (see Appendix D, interview questions) was sometimes changed in response to the flow of the conversation. Often a question to be posed later in the interview was anticipated by the group as discussions progressed. While generally following the pattern of the guide, effort was made not to unduly restrict or adhere to it at the expense of obtaining useful information from the groups. The intent of the interview guide was not to influence answers but to facilitate conversation.

Before the scripted interview began each participant was asked to identify their self and state briefly where in the area she or he lived and for how long. This gave each participant an opportunity to learn about the others and gave the facilitator insight into the make-up of the group. Thanks and appreciation was extended to the participants and the nature of this study was explained. The intent of the group interview was then detailed: length of group interview; confidentiality of participants; the voluntary participation of each person, and that they were free to leave at any time; there are no "wrong" answers, i.e., the study team was not looking for experts; everyone's input on the topic of economic impact of public libraries was welcome.

The facilitator also took care to explain that the group interview was not an opportunity to make changes or suggestions about specific library services, operating procedures, taxes, or leadership. Before the interview began participants' were assured of confidentiality, oral consent was obtained from each individual, and questions about the process were encouraged and answered.

During the interviews, extensive notes were taken. Shortly after the interview, the facilitator captured her impressions, thoughts and additional references on a tape recorder, and then transcribed these notes at a later point. In addition, when participants were asked to write answers on slips of paper, they were collected at the conclusion. Also, the final short survey (see Appendix E) served as a useful summary data collection device.

## Findings and Analysis

When all the group interviews were completed, the facilitator transcribed the preliminary written and recorded notes from each. The data collected on the short survey were included in the totality of data from the discussion questions. These were then compiled and examined. Over 450 separate comments, observations, answers to discussion questions, and written answers from the short surveys were entered into the data set.

The facilitator then conducted qualitative analysis of the textual data. Comments were grouped and sorted according to key topics, issues, and context. Within the data, there are a number of overlapping and repeated remarks, as well as comments recorded only once. Various annotations were made to the data during the analysis; several organizational schemas were applied to the data and tested; and the data were continuously reviewed and re-examined.

Given the complex nature of economic benefits of public libraries, it is not surprising that a broad range of economic impacts were identified. Overall, the general findings were consistent throughout the interviews; no significant differences were found between regions or types of participating libraries. The most commonly cited economic benefits found in the initial dataset are listed, in no particular order, in Table 4-2:

| Common Economic Benefits Cited |
|---|
| Access to financial information |
| Availability of computing technology, especially the Internet |
| Job and career resources |
| Business resources, particularly for small businesses |
| Books and other formats available without cost |
| Educational support on every level |
| Children's programs and services |
| Enhancement of other public services (government & social programs) |

**Table 4-2**

A closer analysis of the group interview dataset found that major themes could be constructed arising out of the nature of economic benefits of public libraries. The most ubiquitous economic impacts found in the course of the site interviews were categorized under major themes, which are as follows:

1. *Direct* economic benefits that accrue to the *individual.*
2. *Indirect* economic benefits that accrue to the *individual.*
3. *Direct* economic benefits that accrue to local *businesses.*
4. *Indirect* economic benefits that accrue to local *businesses.*
5. *Direct* economic benefits that accrue to the local *community.*
6. *Indirect* economic benefits that accrue to the local *community.*

The six major themes can best be displayed in a matrix of class of beneficiaries and nature of benefits, as seen in Table 4-3.

| *Matrix of Economic Benefits* | | Class of Beneficiary | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | **Individual** | **Local Business** | **Local Community** |
| Nature of Benefit | **Direct** | Specific economic benefits that accrue to the individual, e.g., cost of buying materials | Specific economic benefits that accrue to local businesses, e.g., custom mailing lists | Specific economic benefits that accrue to the local community, e.g., tax base from library employment |
| | **Indirect** | General economic benefits that accrue to the individual, e.g., increased property values | General economic benefits that accrue to local businesses, e.g., literate workforce | General economic benefits that accrue to the local community, e.g., quality of life factors |

**Table 4-3 Examples of Economic Benefit**



51 BEST COPY AVAILABLE

## Direct economic benefits that accrue to the individual

Benefits in this cell of the Matrix of Economic Benefits can be summarized as:

- Cost savings
- Personal investment management
- Technology access
- Employment information
- Educational support
- Availability to resources and programs
- Meeting rooms
- Potential cost savings

One of the most visible responsibilities of a public library is to lend materials to patrons. Not surprisingly, this activity was among the most frequently cited economic benefit during the group interviews. Another often-stated benefit resulting in an economic impact is the role public libraries play in support of education at all levels. Several participants stated that a public library supplements school libraries and teacher resources. The library was also felt to be a "safe place for kids to study and socialize." Public libraries were also seen as being a good start to an education, evidenced by the frequent mentioning of support to early childhood education.

Many library services have economic value to individual users in Florida. Interview participants invariably began with the cost savings to themselves and their families of being able to borrow materials from the library rather than having to buy them. "I couldn't afford to read these books otherwise," and "Saves me the cost of buying the book," and "Book lending" and similar statements were noted during the interviews. Furthermore, the available non-print materials such as audio books and videotapes, which are circulating in increasing numbers every year, save individuals significant expenditures.

And it is not only books but also periodicals and newspapers, which result in financial benefit to individuals. In particular, public libraries subscribe to a vast array of financial materials which are otherwise out of range of the average library user: the *Value Line Investment Survey*, the *Wall Street Journal* and other financial publications—many of which cost hundreds of dollars. These materials are heavily used by individuals, particularly retired populations, as attested to both by librarians and users who participated in the interview groups. The specific economic benefit from these materials was noted several times: "Lots of retired people do investment research here," and "Saves many of us investors from prohibitively expensive subscriptions." Also, "I use the library as a source of information concerning financial investments."

There is a dual nature to this economic benefit: first, users save the cost of purchasing these items themselves; and second, many Floridians have been able to better manage their assets as a result of this information. One older library user testified that, several years ago, as a new retiree, she knew practically nothing about portfolio strategies

and was anxious to learn. Her investment club has been meeting at her public library for over 12 years; each member of the club does research and shares it with the group, so she appreciates the extensive financial reference section of her library and feels it has added greatly to her financial security during her retirement years. Given the number of seniors in the state of Florida, the aggregate economic impact on individuals is likely to be substantial.

Another major emphasis within this theme was that of the economic benefit of library technology for individuals. Time and again the value of gaining or perfecting technology skills or accessing computers, printers or the Internet were cited. Learning e-mail functions, word processing or Internet searching are available to many individuals only at their local library. "Entry level computer skills," "email skills," "check email," and "[This] library has a terrific computer lab, good computers," were repeated often. One patron stated, "I don't check out books. I do research in the library and on the library Internet computers. "The impact of technology access was considered especially conspicuous for lower income patrons. "Access to information on virtually any subject via Internet and other technologies," is another example that can produce direct benefits to individuals. As an aside, one librarian noted that Internet access in public libraries is bringing patrons back who "hadn't set foot in the library for years."

Another example is in the area of career support; many public libraries offer individuals the opportunity to enhance their professional competence and skills. One comment was, "Availability of resource information for my job," which is a direct benefit for individuals. Programming in public libraries also reinforces this theme: "Access to programs," "Free programs on topics of interest that would cost at other venues," and "Mentoring program [at my library]" were quotes from participants that attest to the direct value of various topics.

Specific activities also lead to direct individual and group benefits, such as the availability of meeting rooms. One example was the League of Women Voters, who might otherwise have to pay for meeting space to hold meetings.

The public library also provides individuals with career support through a range of services and materials. Among the recorded comments were these: "Word processing; I can do resumes," "job resources," and "source of employment information." One anecdote involved a patron trying to download the resume she had prepared. A library technician spent over 20 minutes with her, and when she thanked him, he said matter-of-factly that that's what he's there for. The upshot of this transaction was that she got the job she was seeking and sent a letter of thanks to the library director. "Finding jobs on the Internet" as well as posting resumes to a central resume database were also cited a couple of times. Another point on career development was made by a participant who commented that classified advertising from Florida newspapers can be accessed at a single place—the library. This enables jobs seekers to search opportunities beyond their own communities.

Other specific benefits to individuals mentioned, are briefly noted: travel information (city-by-city guides, accommodations with per-night costs, official airline guides) saves patrons money on travel expenses; a patron checked out a book on playing Bingo which resulted in increased Bingo winnings; one patron uses the Internet to access international financial information and news about the Indian Stock Exchange; a telephone provider (Bell South) now charges $1.75 for directory assistance, while the public librarian will provide this for free, including some international telephone numbers; fax services. While these items did not emerge as major themes, they nevertheless indicate the extraordinary range of specific economic benefit to individuals.

### Indirect economic benefits that accrue to the individual

Benefits in this cell of the Matrix of Economic Benefits can be summarized as:

- Access to resources and programs
- Increase in perceived value of property in library vicinity
- Meeting rooms
- Potential cost savings

Indirect economic impacts that benefit individuals in communities supported by library services are numerous. One example is in the area of career support; where individuals enhance their professional skills and increase the value of their work to their employers. One comment was, "Availability of resource information for my job," which, although it may lead to a direct benefit to the employee, it is likely to produce an indirect benefit to the employer.

Specific activities also lead to indirect benefits, such as the availability of meeting rooms for service groups where monetary savings can then be put toward accomplishing the group's mission. Programming in public libraries also reinforces this theme: "Access to programs," "Free programs on topics of interest that would cost at other venues," and "Mentoring program [at my library]" were quotes from participants, which attest to the indirect value of access to speakers and issues of various topics.

When a library is built, the economic health of the surrounding neighborhood is seen to increase. As a result, individual homeowners can generally benefit from the resulting increase in property values. One participant pointedly said that "[The] value of my house is highest" because of the presence of the local public library, as well as a neighborhood school. Another participant stated that a pamphlet which listed the desirable features of a real estate property included schools, *the library*, stores, two public parks, and nearby golf course.

### Direct economic benefits that accrue to local businesses

Benefits in this cell of the Matrix of Economic Benefits can be summarized as:

- Support of local business activity
- Availability of business resources (print, reference and electronic)
- Zip code data and mailing lists
- Extension of area economic outreach efforts
- Librarian expertise

Local businesses owe a great deal for their development to the role public libraries in Florida play in support of their economic activities. Small businesses of every sort: retail, professional, and service-based enterprises benefit in specific ways from local public libraries. The kinds of businesses benefiting that were mentioned by name during the site interviews include law offices; medical offices; catering companies; freelance journalists and writers; and locally owned franchises. In particular, relocating businesses, start-up businesses, and small businesses of all kinds (1-500 employees) were perceived as enjoying the greatest benefit from public library products and services.

General references to library activities resulting in economic impacts to business were numerous:

- "[The library provides] research for start-ups as well as [being an] ongoing, valuable source of resources."
- "Sometimes librarians conduct research [which] would otherwise be done by a paid intern or assistant."
- "The runner at our law office requests materials through interlibrary loan, and does general research for the attorneys. [We rely on the] Code of Federal Regulations at the library." (This participant also noted that the Lexis-Nexis online service was available to everyone at the public library, but its use was restricted at the local bar association library.)
- One participant related that the *Physicians' Desk Reference* at a doctor's office was from 1989, and hence, outdated. The library copy, more up-to-date, was used instead. "Curtailing subscriptions to business references" was a comment noted in the scope of this theme.

Zip code information was frequently cited as a valuable source of information for local businesses.

The ability to custom create and download mailing lists from various electronic and print sources (*ABI Inform* was mentioned by name), is a huge financial benefit to business in view of the cost of mailing lists from commercial sources. Marketing information also came up repeatedly as an example of a specific business resource available to business people in a community. One participant, a librarian, testified that he had achieved the same results as a professional corporate market research project using only library resources. It was also noted that copyright and patent information is of specific economic value to local businesses, as are the Federal Emergency Management Agency floodplain maps for insurance information.

In addition, specific activities offered in conjunction with other local economic outreach efforts such as economic development councils, Chambers of Commerce, and the Small Business Administration (SBA), reveals the specific impact of public libraries partnering with, and capitalizing on, area resources. One interviewee, representing an economic development office, stated, "We have a packet of material on economic development, including financing and venture capital, and in it we steer people to the library." It was also recorded that "SBA workshops are held at the library." It is clear from these group interviews that many new or relocating businesses in Florida are referred to their public library. One of the factors cited for the value of libraries to businesses is that the public library staff tends to be specialists in local information. This is evidenced by the following two comments: the library, "Provides a ready source of local statistical data" and a "Storehouse of local historical records in print and photocopies."

Several times participants reinforced the impression that library business resources were significantly more valuable in the presence of the expertise of the library staff. In other words, not only was the collection itself viewed as an important resource for area business people, but the librarian was believed by many to be a critical factor in finding, accessing and utilizing them to their fullest extent, especially with regard to electronic resources. One comment to this effect was "The reference librarian is available when [my] office needs information."

### Indirect economic benefits that accrue to local businesses

Benefits in this cell of the Matrix of Economic Benefits can be summarized as:

- Educated workforce
- Employee access to resources
- Auxiliary meeting and office space
- Community relations opportunities

In addition to the direct benefits noted above, abundant indirect benefits result from having the services of the public library. "Better educated community with literate job seekers" is definitely an advantage to local businesses when hiring and maintaining their staff. Furthermore, more people are likely to be employed in the "knowledge" sector, which demands constant skills enhancement and lifelong learning. Hence, businesses benefit from the proximity their employees have to the resources at the local library.

It was also noted, that the mobility and independence of today's (and tomorrow's) workforce is greater than it has ever been, given the convergence of new communications technologies. People can telecommute much more easily than in the past. Also, since workers have more freedom to locate anywhere, quality of life issues have never been more of a competitive advantage to local businesses.

As noted for individuals above the use of meeting rooms is of general economic benefit to local businesses as well, especially small enterprises without office space of

their own. Furthermore, "Minutes and agenda of local School Board and County Commission meetings" were cited as a way for the private sector to keep up with changes in local government and public issues, which may affect them. Along this line, the focus group held at the Northwest Regional Library District (Panama City) revealed that a "New airport feasibility study [which has the potential for] major economic development impact of $250 million" was placed on display by law at the public library. It was implied that support for the project might have been garnered as a result. Drawings for a new bridge and the architectural model for a new library branch were two further examples from other participants in this vein.

Community associations and events, such as Friends of the Park, Art in the Park, and Nature's Walk were examples given by one participant, which were "all supported with library resources. Including finding grant makers through the *Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance.*" Corporate or business sponsorship opportunities for matching funds may have been seen as a factor in the success of these community achievements, and resulted in a general benefit to businesses.

### Direct economic benefits that accrue to the local community

Benefits in this cell of the Matrix of Economic Benefits can be summarized as:

- Library as employer
- Library as consumer
- Key to revitalization projects

One of the most immediate ways that the public library impacts communities directly is as an employer. As an employer, the library pays salaries and benefits to staff who live, work, shop, pay taxes and even retire in their local communities. Indeed, the *Federal State Cooperative System (FSCS) for Public Library Data (FY1997)* reveals that in total, Florida public libraries spent over $161 million dollars on salaries and benefits, not an insignificant impact in local communities around the state. In some regions, the local library may sometimes be a relatively major and steady source of employment. Nearly every participant attending the group interviews who worked at the library listed "my job," "my salary," or "my livelihood" as ways the public library is economically important to them. The direct health of the economy depends on employment opportunities of all sorts, which clearly includes library staff.

Another direct role in the economic development of communities is that of the library as consumer. Libraries buy the services of power companies, janitorial services, telecommunication companies, plumbers, electricians, and a host of other local community business. The library, like any other enterprise, impacts its area through its spending. The Federal State Cooperative Statistics data also lists some $22 million in capital outlay by Florida public libraries in 1997. The construction projects, which these millions represent, have a direct impact on the local community. From the same source, we also learn that Florida public libraries brought nearly $3.1 million of federal grants into the local coffers.

Several participants observed that public libraries were key factors in community development projects. "Keystone in downtown redevelopment" was one participant's assertion about the citing of a new library branch. "Stimulus to downtown traffic as a community hub" was another way this was described. Participants stated many times that the presence of a new library, or the redevelopment of an existing one, favorably impacted its immediate surroundings. One interviewee described the $3 million renovation of a cooperative headquarters building on a main thoroughfare of the city. As a direct result of this renovation, according to the participant, the street has begun a major economic redevelopment, including the relocation of a police center.

## Indirect economic benefits that accrue to the local community

Benefits in this cell of the Matrix of Economic Benefits can be summarized as:

- Desirable presence
- Cultural center
- Key to attracting people
- Crucial to disadvantaged populations
- Widespread educational enhancement
- Expansion of government and social service benefits
- Voter information and participation

Much of the group interview data belongs under this theme. In some ways, the general economic benefit to the local community is the most important. Several categories of impact around general community benefit were noted during the data analysis:

### *"Quality of life" factors*

The general impression among most participants is that the public library has clear impact on, and is an active partner in the community. The result of the physical presence of the library, according to many, is that the "library attracts people"; "gives a sense of stability"; "encourages location to [this] county by new homeowners and other residents"; "safe place for kids"; and "social gathering." One participant called her local library "the 'living room' of the village." Clearly, people are proud of their public library and consider it to be a valuable neighbor and a positive impact on their quality of life—thus contributing to the overall economic strength of the community.

The library also impacts the "psyche" of the local community: "Important source of cultural and information programming—can't get that on the Internet," was quoted at one group interview; and another participant also refuted the idea that bookstores can replace libraries. An older participant believes that through the library, he "keeps in touch with my community since I retired."

Some quality of life indexes (*Best Places to Live*, *Best Places to Raise Your Children*, *Best Places to Retire,* etc.) use a "books per capita" statistic when profiling

communities, so libraries are considered as part of the index that describes quality of life. One interviewee proudly reported that recently a new community arts director had been recruited to her county. This person, formerly from Los Angeles, has an impressive resume in the arts and chose to make this move because, in the impression of the participant, of the quality of life for his family due in some measure to the reputation of the library.

Furthermore, the community benefits when the library supports populations that are disadvantaged to some extent or another. The value of the public library to the homeless population was cited: it was felt that if homeless people are inside reading in the library, they are not outside on the streets. A strong sentiment also prevailed in the value of the library to the quality of life for immigrant populations. One participant explained the nature of library services to immigrants from Eastern Europe, Asia and Bosnia. The library provides translation of text as well as information about library services in many languages. The library is also a source for family literacy services, English for speakers of other languages, and local transportation information. Participants believed that long-term benefits for immigrant populations accrue to the community as they are integrated into the community. The public library is also a focal point to assist in the assimilation of visitors and new homeowners to the area.

***Education support factors***

Perhaps the most often stated community benefit, which results in indirect economic impact, is the role public libraries play in support of education at all levels. Libraries support students "from their first homework assignment through community college," as one participant put it. Another noted that "Nowadays, second graders are given Internet assignments," and that many have to go to the library to get them done. Several participants believe that a public library "supplements school libraries and teacher resources" and provides "better hours for access," presumably, after school hours. The library was also called an "adjunct library for schools and students" and many feel that it provides a "place for kids to study and socialize." There was agreement that "homework help [means] success of student population is improved." Private schools were also noted to rely heavily on public libraries.

Early childhood education support was a dominant view. The advantage of public libraries to being a good start in education is evidenced in the following remarks: "summer children's programs are enormously successful. "Establishing [early] reading habits in children;" and "Great materials for grand- and great-grandchildren for education," were noted in several different site interviews.

"Financial aid [resources] for education" was echoed several times. The ability to raise money for community college education and beyond was considered a general community benefit. Furthermore, Florida's strong community college system of "enrichment education" was praised for its merits and libraries were noted for the support they provided. The role and economic benefits in education from the public library

identified in this study support those described by Summers, Fraser, Landry, and Burnett (1999).

***Civic support factors***

Many comments lead to the conclusion that the general community benefits from libraries in a variety of civic and government programming. Participants' statements supporting this include: "support for public service agencies"; and "advocacy via Congress, State Legislature, etc." One patron desperately needed to research city codes under an approaching deadline, and felt he got information quicker from the library than by placing a request at the regulatory agency. The library serves as a repository of government regulations and community standards, and in providing these materials, can be said to relieve pressure from other agencies.

Several interview participants noted the value of the public library in the voting process. Two such comments were: "patrons register to vote at the library"; and "voter registration—good to register after normal business hours of the election commission." The library is also a primary source for tax information: access to "tax forms"; "access to news, health, tax and other information"; and, in general, providing a "central place for reading documents of public interest."

A striking example of a public library supporting government programming is one branch location in Florida, which serves as a central stop for the bloodmobile, as well as a distribution center of milk, formula, nutrition advice, and nursing checkups and services for women in the Women and Infant Children (WIC) program.

Overall participants saw public libraries as a vital necessity to an informed, participatory citizenry, and, in some ways, as a focal point for democratic activity under this theme.

## Additional Findings

While not directly within the scope of the major findings of this chapter, these additional findings reiterate the range of economic benefits a library provides its community.

Several participants in multiple sites insisted that the economic impacts from public libraries vary widely by individual. They felt that because the benefit is essentially unique, it would be difficult to arrive at benefits and economic measures that are relevant to the state at large. One participant, when the nature of the study was explained, wondered aloud whether a public library needs an economic justification at all.

A participant at one interview noted that some libraries have added for-profit services to their endeavor, such as coffeehouses or restaurants, in an effort to assist with rising expenditures of public library products and services, and to provide amenities comparable to local bookstores. One participant is investigating the potential for

collaboration between public libraries and e-commerce ("dot coms") as an untapped resource for profiting from what libraries do best—increasing reading activities and providing reference services. There was a dissenting opinion stated during this discussion, however, that when libraries get into business and for-profit ventures, they are trading on part of the valuable library reputation and image, and ought to proceed with caution.

On another note, it was pointed out that due to the temperate climate of Florida, residents are able to play tennis and golf all year round. As a result, parks and recreation departments may have more perceived value in the eyes of the public. This was corroborated by the fact that some municipalities have long range planning for parks and recreation services but fail even to mention public library service. Indeed, some local politicians have run on a "green" platform; that is, the strength of parks and recreation constituted the main election issue. The sense of the group discussion was that libraries rarely merit this kind of political attention, except when threatened with funding cuts or closures.

## The Range of Economic Impacts and Benefits

The group interviews provided an important perspective on identifying and describing economic benefits and impacts from public libraries in Florida. As this chapter suggests, the range and extent of economic impacts and benefits that result from the public library are significant. The group interviews also suggest that while identifying these economic impacts and benefits can be done, placing a monetary value on these benefits is difficult given the situational context of local communities, the libraries, and the values of library users.

The economic impact from public libraries in training and supporting individuals to be successful in the new electronic environment cannot be overstated. Given Governor Jeb Bush's emphasis on promoting e-commerce in the state and making Florida a leader in the telecommunications and computing industries, such training and support is essential. The ITFlorida.com Task Force (http://www.itflorida.com/) has outlined a bold and innovative strategy to move Florida forward in various IT fields. As identified from these group interviews, the public library continues to be an important partner in this initiative via its training of Florida residents and its provision of public access to networked information services and resources.

The group interviews also suggest that the range of economic impacts and benefits from public libraries are both direct and indirect. Oftentimes the range of *indirect* impacts and benefits that accrue to the local community because of the public library are not considered. These indirect impacts, however, are significant. Since many of these impacts fall under the category of contributing to "the public good" or the overall "quality of life," they are difficult to equate in monetary terms. Yet, as participants noted, they are significant factors that attract new businesses and individuals to the state and make existing residents more productive.

Finally, the group interviews found that oftentimes, patrons, local government staff, librarians, friends and trustees, and others had given little thought about the public library as providing economic impacts and benefits to the local community and individuals. Indeed, the public library was "taken for granted" as a key player and component in the overall health of the community but not in economic terms until people started to discuss the topic. As the various group interviews preceded and participants thought more about the topic, it became clear that they recognized numerous economic impacts and benefits and increasingly realized the overall benefit of public library services.

# CHAPTER V
# ANALYSIS AND CONCLUSIONS

## Introduction

In the following sections of this chapter, we provide an analysis of this study's major findings along with conclusions regarding the work as a whole. First, we provide a typology of economic benefits and impacts identified in this study. Second, we look at patrons' perceptions regarding libraries' contributions to and support for education, use of computer technology, local business, civic impact, impact on jobs, and the community. Third, we look at perceptions of these benefit areas in the context of library income levels, focusing on response rates from patrons of the library systems with the highest and lowest total and per capita income. Fourth, further income analysis includes a review of library funding sources in Florida, and comparisons with national data. Fifth, we present a geographical depiction of particularly positive patron responses using GIS analysis. Lastly, we end the chapter with general observations and conclusions.

As is more fully discussed below, the study team has found substantial, wide and varied economic impacts and benefits from Florida's public libraries. This study clearly reveals that patrons believe libraries contribute to their financial well being, provide economic benefits to local businesses, and support community development. Libraries are recognized for providing access to financial information, job and career resources, computer technology and services, businesses resources, educational support for the community, and for providing other public services with economic benefits and impacts.

Notwithstanding this analysis, the study also demonstrates that there is much more research and work to be done in this area, which we discuss in detail in Chapters 6 and 7. Moreover, we expect that as libraries continue to move into the networked environment, there will be increased economic benefits from libraries requiring additional study.

## Economic Impacts and Benefits

The following typology of economic impacts and benefits resulting from pubic library services in Florida was derived from three sources: (1) critical incidents reported in the Public Library Use in Pennsylvania study(McClure & Bertot, 1998); (2) economic impacts from public library use derived from the literature review for this study; and (3) content analysis of the economic impact logs kept by selected librarians in Florida for this study. The typology was first compiled using items (1) and (2), and using that as a basis for organization, the responses from the economic impact logs were then incorporated into the list. Tables 5-1 through 5-4 include, respectively, separate lists within the typology of impacts on the local and state economy, individual business development, individuals' personal finance, and education and community agencies.

| Impact Area | Possible Economic Impacts and Benefits |
|---|---|
| Local and State Economy | Provides programs to promote economic development |
| | Provides facts and statistics for economic development |
| | Provides information about local and state businesses |
| | Provides resources for real estate-related research |
| | Provides general information about the community |
| | Provides resources for community organization/business lobby |
| | Supports local culture and arts |
| | Provides a public meeting place, a cultural, and an educational facility |
| | Programs and events draw people from surrounding communities |
| | Attracts development and business to community |
| | Provides resources for local government and supports government libraries |
| | Provides information regarding, and promotes citizen involvement in, the democratic and political processes |
| | Provides a "safe place" for after-school children |
| | Provides employment information |

**Table 5-1**

| Impact Area | Possible Economic Impacts and Benefits |
|---|---|
| Individual Business Development | Provides information on local job openings, supports and encourages small businesses |
| | Helps startups for new business and improves overall success of self-employment |
| | Provides demographic and general information for marketing purposes |
| | Provides business-related programs and workshops, and small business tax information |
| | Provides venue for artists to display work, writers to give lectures, and a start-venue up for entrepreneurs |
| | Provides resources for small businesses and information/services for business research |
| | Provides directory of local and state businesses and business-related databases |
| | Provides information on grants or Federal assistance for small businesses |

**Table 5-2**

| Impact Area | Possible Economic Impacts and Benefits |
|---|---|
| Individuals' Personal Finances | Provides information on companies and new business ventures |
| | Provides information on new career fields |
| | Helps locate jobs openings, obtain skills to get a job, and prepare for job interview |
| | Helps do current job better/increase productivity |
| | Provides patent information |
| | Helps individuals learn about business in general |
| | Helps learn or improve computer skills |
| | Increases profit/savings through investment information |
| | Save money by comparison pricing on buying business-related books, Internet service, and computer equipment |
| | Provides access to government agencies and resources |
| | Provides resources for business-related information |
| | Helps with purchase/sale of car or boat |
| | Provides tax forms and information on income tax preparation |
| | Provides resources for information concerning college scholarships/financial assistance |
| | Save money through do-it-yourself project |

**Table 5-3**

| Impact Area | Possible Economic Impacts and Benefits |
|---|---|
| Education and Community Agencies | Provides educational facilities |
| | Helps students do assignments and learn about career planning |
| | Provides study books for standardized tests needed for college entry |
| | Provides students access and training on computers and the Internet |
| | Provides free curriculum support for home schooling, and support to private and parochial schools |
| | Provides educational programming, support & resources to babies, toddlers, and pre-school children in group and individual settings |
| | Provides early childhood experiences that teach responsibility and socialization skills to children |
| | Provides referrals to agencies |
| | Promotes activities of agencies |
| | Provides information resources that support agencies |
| | Provides training for agency employees |

**Table 5-4**

## Patron Perceptions of Benefits

In this section we present findings from questions 8 and 9 of the patron survey in tabular and graphical form. Survey question 8 asks respondents to select all that apply among choices reflecting a positive sense of the library's presence in the community. Question 9 is composed of seven categories of economic benefits that a patron may perceive a library providing. Each category in question 9 contains from two-to-six specific choices which respondents could select to indicate their perceptions of beneficial impacts from public libraries; selection rates for those choices pertaining to libraries' contributions to and support for education, use of computer technology, local business, civic impact, and impact on jobs are analyzed below. The figures display the percentage of respondents choosing at least one item from the categories in questions 8 and 9. The information is presented first on a statewide basis and then by region, subregion, age group, and gender.

### Education

The use of the library to support education is seen as one benefit. This is true across regions, subregions, age groups, and gender (see Figures 5-1 through 5-4). Patrons use library services and programs for everything from introducing their children to the joy of reading to homeschooling children.

| Region | Percent | Number Choosing | Totals by Region |
|---|---|---|---|
| Southern n=328 | 55% | 179 | 328 |
| Central n=1093 | 53% | 575 | 1093 |
| Northern n=535 | 58% | 308 | 535 |

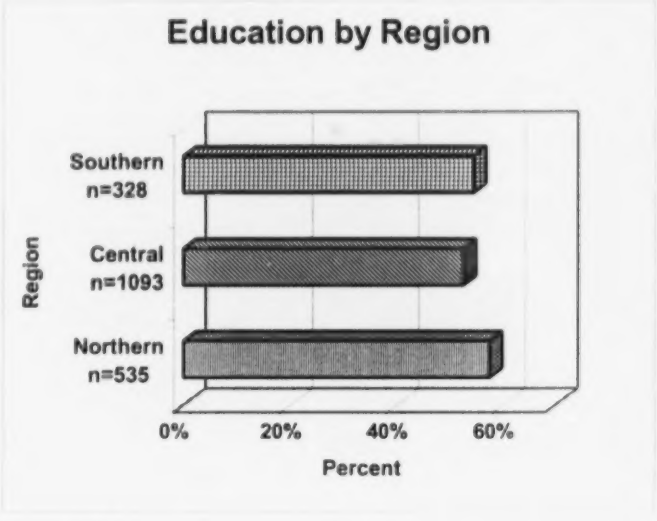


Figure 5-1

| Sub-region | Percent | Number Choosing | Totals by Sub-Region |
|---|---|---|---|
| Rural n=479 | 51% | 246 | 479 |
| Suburban n=1075 | 54% | 585 | 1075 |
| Urban n=402 | 57% | 231 | 402 |

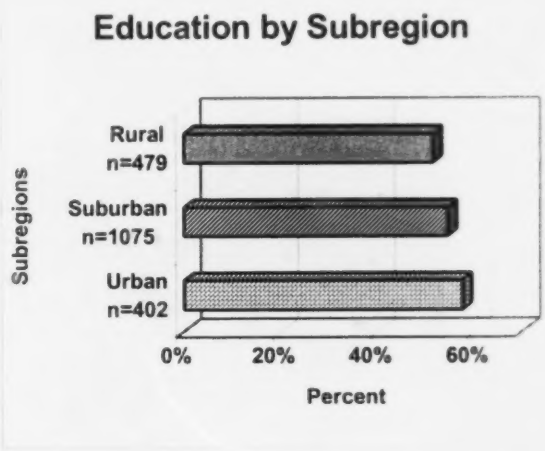


Figure 5-2

| Age | Percent | Number Choosing | Totals by Age Group |
|---|---|---|---|
| No Age Given n=18 | 24% | 4 | 17 |
| 56-up n=784 | 50% | 394 | 785 |
| 36-55 n=747 | 61% | 454 | 747 |
| 18-35 n=407 | 52% | 210 | 407 |

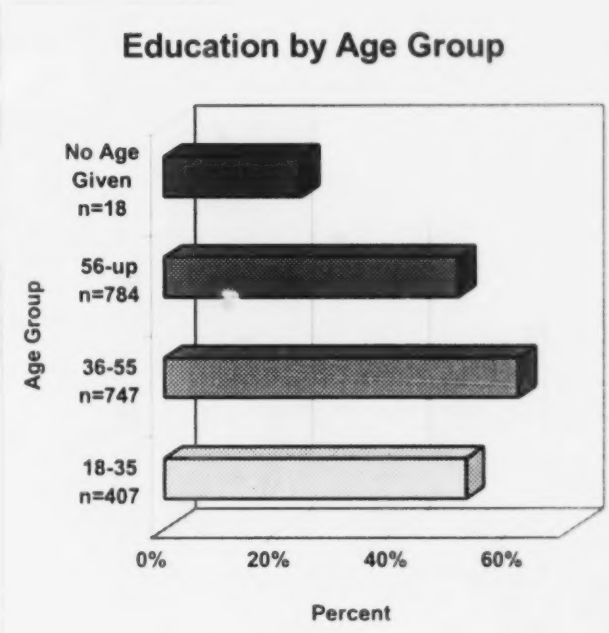


Figure 5-3

| Gender | Percent | Number Choosing | Total by Gender |
|---|---|---|---|
| No GenderGiven n=71 | 54% | 38 | 71 |
| Female n=1216 | 56% | 676 | 1216 |
| Male n=669 | 52% | 348 | 669 |

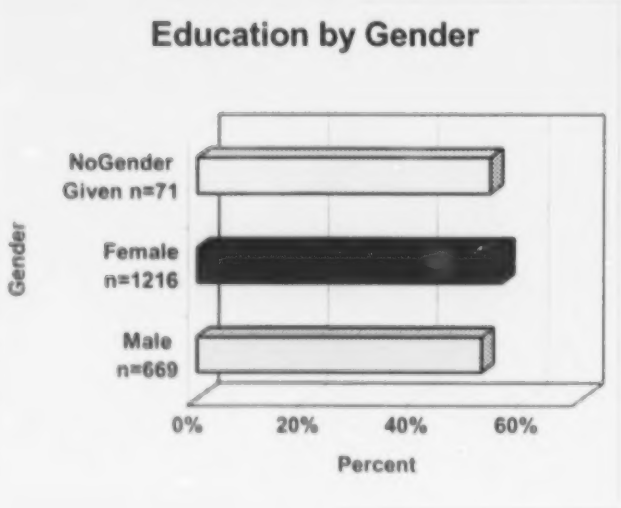


Figure 5-4

## Computer Technology

Patrons also see the use of the computers available at public libraries as an economic benefit. Computers are being used by patrons for email purposes, to gather information about a potential consumer purchase, and to gain or to increase existing computer skills. This usage is common among all regions, subregions, age groups, and gender (see Figures 5-5 through 5-8). This availability and use of computers at Florida's public libraries will continue to grow in importance to patrons and likely provide an economic benefit to them.

| Region | Percent | Number Choosing | Totals by Region |
|---|---|---|---|
| Southern n=328 | 63% | 205 | 328 |
| Central n=1093 | 61% | 668 | 1093 |
| Northern n=535 | 59% | 315 | 535 |

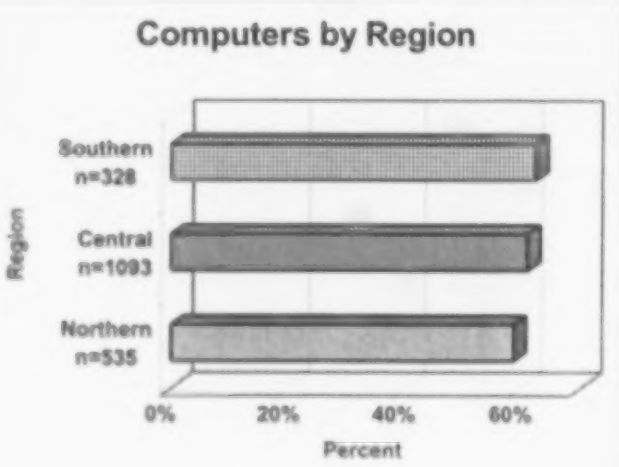


Figure 5-5



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| Subregion | Percent | Number Choosing | Totals by Sub-region |
|---|---|---|---|
| Rural n=479 | 65% | 312 | 479 |
| Suburban n=1075 | 57% | 608 | 1075 |
| Urban n=402 | 67% | 268 | 402 |

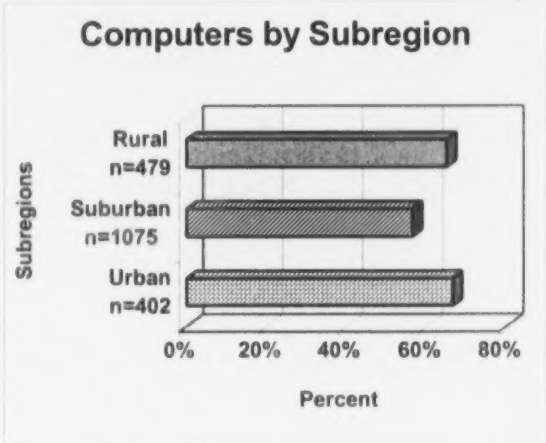


Figure 5-6

| Age | Percent | Number Choosing | Total by Age Group |
|---|---|---|---|
| No Age Given n=17 | 18% | 3 | 17 |
| 56-up n=785 | 50% | 391 | 785 |
| 36-55 n=747 | 65% | 486 | 747 |
| 18-35 n=407 | 76% | 308 | 407 |

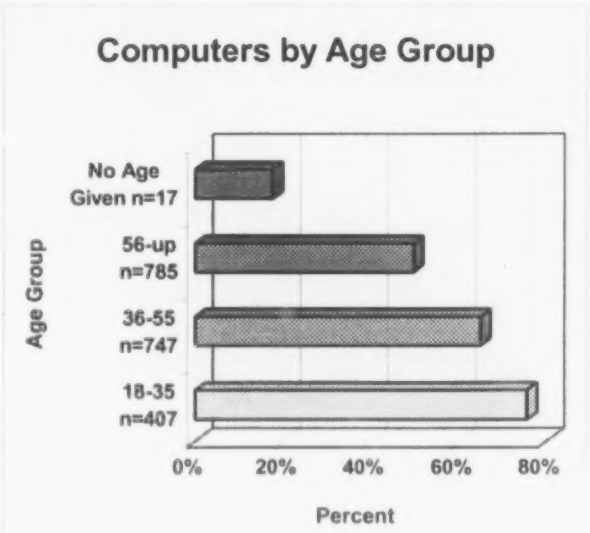


Figure 5-7

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| Gender | Percent | Number Choosing | Totals by Gender |
|---|---|---|---|
| No Gender Given n=71 | 52% | 37 | 71 |
| Female n=1216 | 61% | 738 | 1216 |
| Male n=669 | 62% | 413 | 669 |

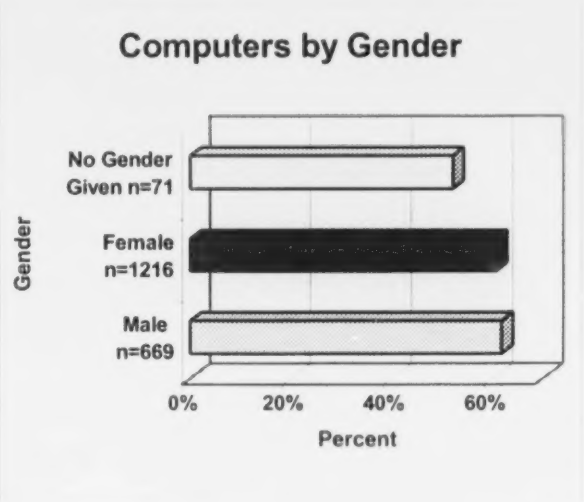


Figure 5-8

## Impact on Business

Patrons also indicate awareness that the library contributes to and has economic impact on local businesses, such as when supplying information to those wishing to start a business. We found that the number of patrons selecting topics that relate to business was a significant indication that patrons see the library as having economic impact on business, and though the percent of those selecting a business topic was not as high as some of the other topics it still received a recognizable amount of attention (see Figures 5-9 through 5-12).

| Region | Percent | Number Choosing | Totals by Region |
|---|---|---|---|
| Southern n=328 | 35% | 115 | 328 |
| Central n=1093 | 29% | 318 | 1093 |
| Northern n=535 | 32% | 169 | 535 |

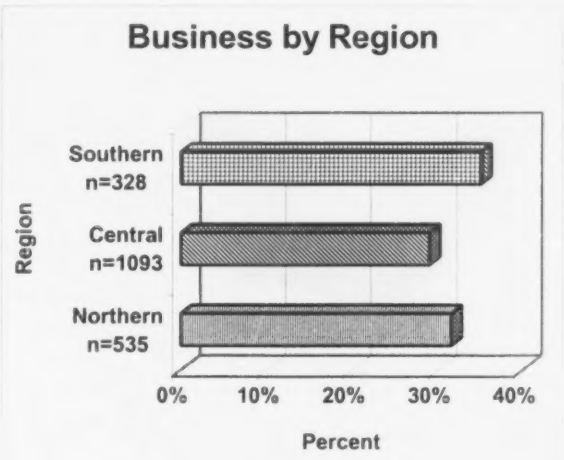


Figure 5-9

| Subregion | Percent | Number Choosing | Totals by Sub-region |
|---|---|---|---|
| Rural n=479 | 33% | 156 | 479 |
| Suburban n=1075 | 28% | 302 | 1075 |
| Urban n=402 | 36% | 144 | 402 |

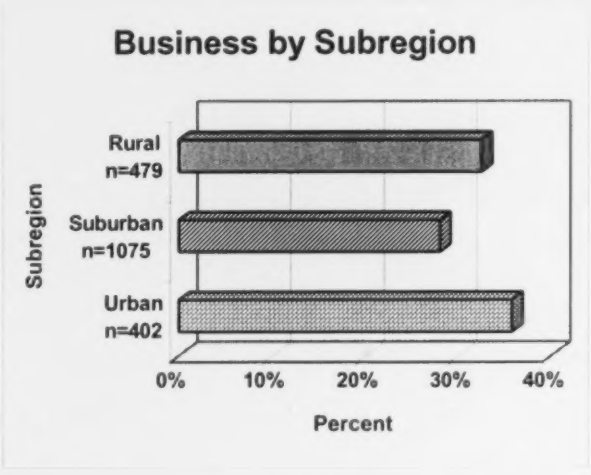


Figure 5-10

| Age | Percent | Number Choosing | Totals by Age Group |
|---|---|---|---|
| No Age Given n=17 | 29% | 5 | 17 |
| 56-up n=785 | 22% | 173 | 785 |
| 36-55 n=747 | 36% | 270 | 747 |
| 18-35 n=407 | 38% | 154 | 407 |

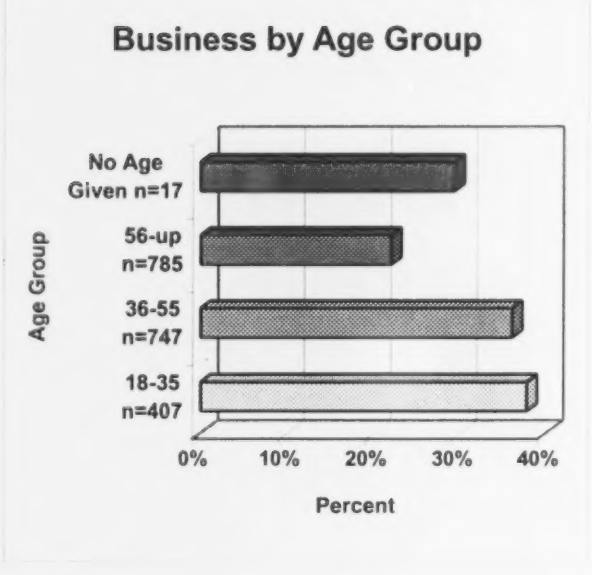


Figure 5-11

| Gender | Percent | Number Choosing | Totals by Gender |
|---|---|---|---|
| No Gender Given n=71 | 27% | 19 | 71 |
| Female n=1216 | 30% | 363 | 1216 |
| Male n=669 | 33% | 220 | 669 |

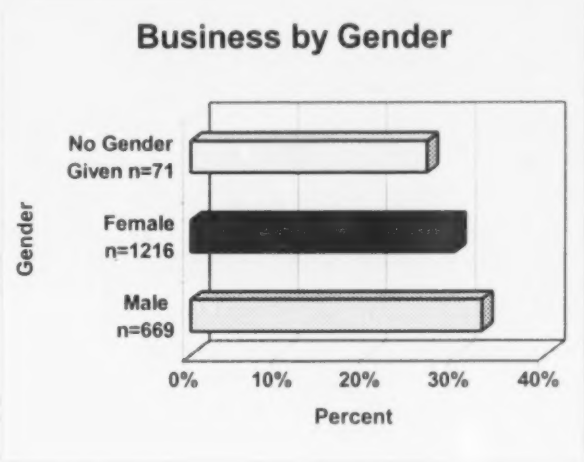


Figure 5-12

## Civic Impact

Patrons are also aware of the civic impact libraries have in their communities (see Figures 5-13 through 5-16). Among the things libraries do to assist patrons in meeting their civic duty is to offer meeting space for civic organizations, assist in voter registration, and make tax forms available. Libraries also serve as a posting place for proposed changes in local ordinances, and other local government proposals.

| Region | Percent | Number Choosing | Totals by Region |
|---|---|---|---|
| Southern n=328 | 55% | 179 | 328 |
| Central n=1093 | 56% | 611 | 1093 |
| Northern n=535 | 52% | 278 | 535 |

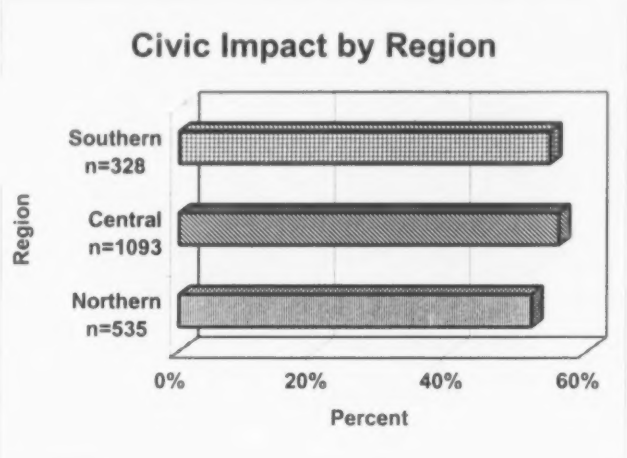


Figure 5-13

| Subregion | Percent | Number Choosing | Totals by Sub-region |
|---|---|---|---|
| Rural n=479 | 58% | 279 | 479 |
| Suburban n=1075 | 54% | 580 | 1075 |
| Urban n=402 | 52% | 209 | 402 |

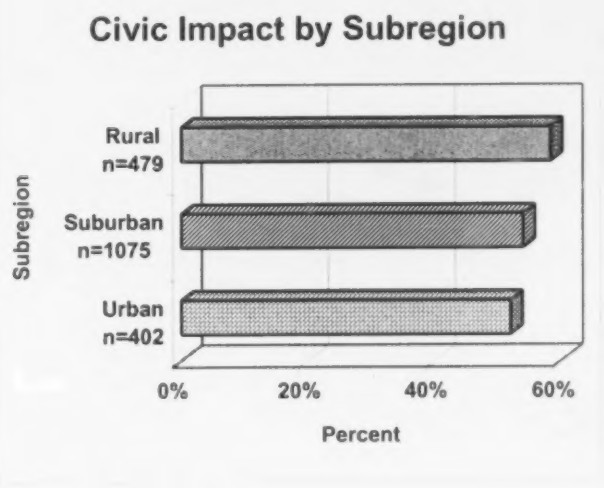


Figure 5-14

| Age | Percent | Number Choosing | Totals by Age Group |
|---|---|---|---|
| No Age Given n=17 | 29% | 5 | 17 |
| 56-up n=785 | 53% | 419 | 785 |
| 36-55 n=747 | 58% | 430 | 747 |
| 18-35 n=407 | 53% | 214 | 407 |

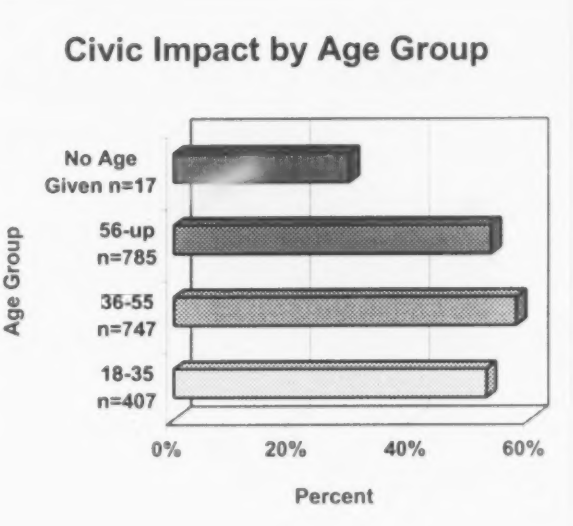


Figure 5-15

| Gender | Percent | Number Choosing | Totals by Gender |
|---|---|---|---|
| No Gender Given n=71 | 56% | 40 | 71 |
| Female n=1216 | 55% | 672 | 1216 |
| Male n=669 | 53% | 356 | 669 |

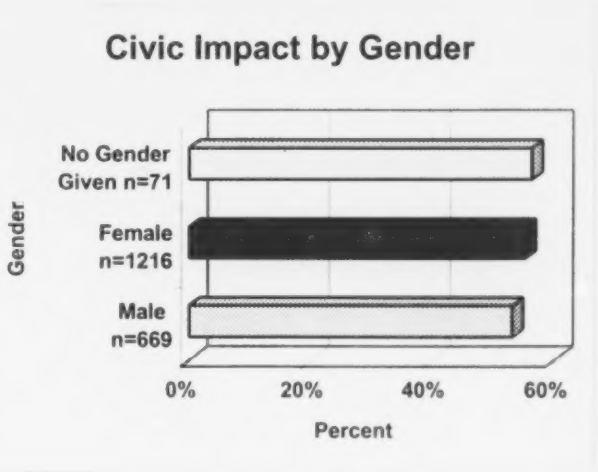


Figure 5-16

## Impact on Jobs

It is also evident that patrons realize how their jobs benefit from services available to them through their library (see Figures 5-17 through 5-20). Libraries provide information to patrons that make them more productive on their jobs, supply them with job related training in the area of computer skills, and have assisted patrons in finding employment.

| Region | Percent | Number Choosing | Totals by Region |
|---|---|---|---|
| Southern n=328 | 53% | 174 | 328 |
| Central n=1093 | 45% | 487 | 1093 |
| Northern n=535 | 50% | 267 | 535 |

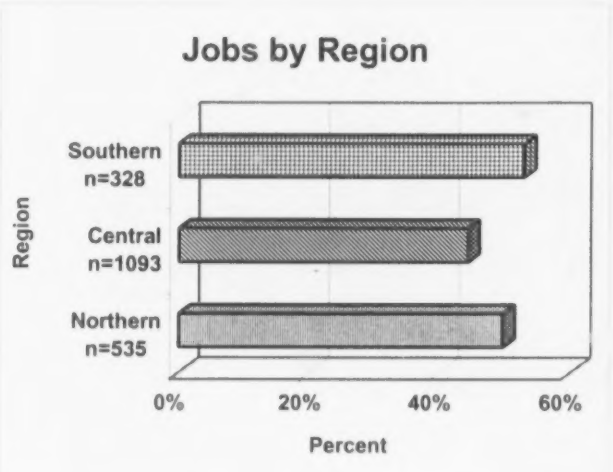


Figure 5-17



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| Subregion | Percent | Number Choosing | Totals by Sub-region |
|---|---|---|---|
| Urban n=402 | 50% | 201 | 402 |
| Suburban n=1075 | 45% | 487 | 1075 |
| Rural n=479 | 50% | 240 | 479 |

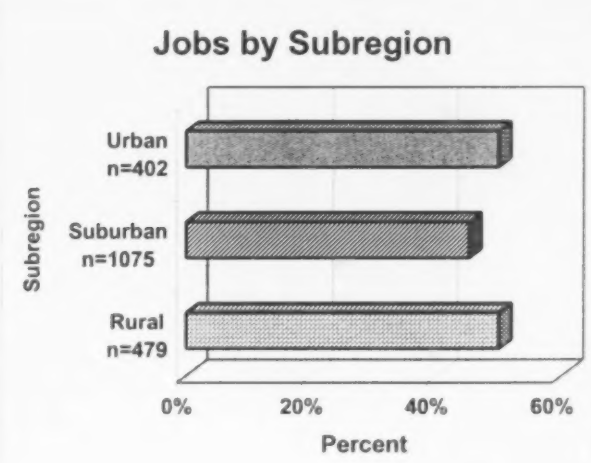


Figure 5-18

| Age | Percent | Number Choosing | Totals by Age Group |
|---|---|---|---|
| No Age Given n=17 | 35% | 6 | 17 |
| 56-up n=785 | 28% | 221 | 785 |
| 36-55 n=747 | 62% | 461 | 747 |
| 18-35 n=407 | 59% | 240 | 407 |

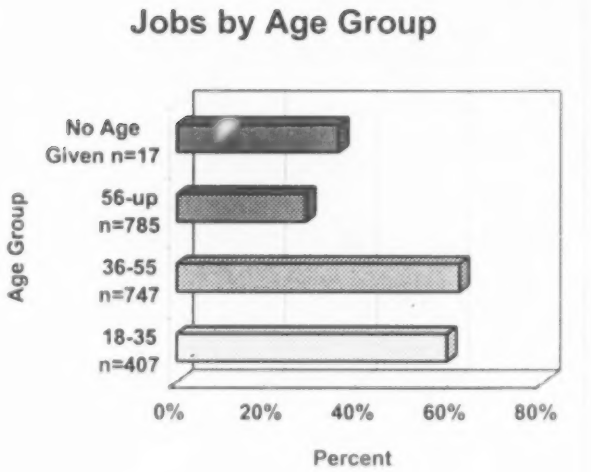


Figure 5-19

| Gender | Percent | Number Choosing | Totals by Gender |
|---|---|---|---|
| No Gender Given n=71 | 44% | 31 | 71 |
| Female n=1216 | 48% | 583 | 1216 |
| Male n=669 | 47% | 314 | 669 |

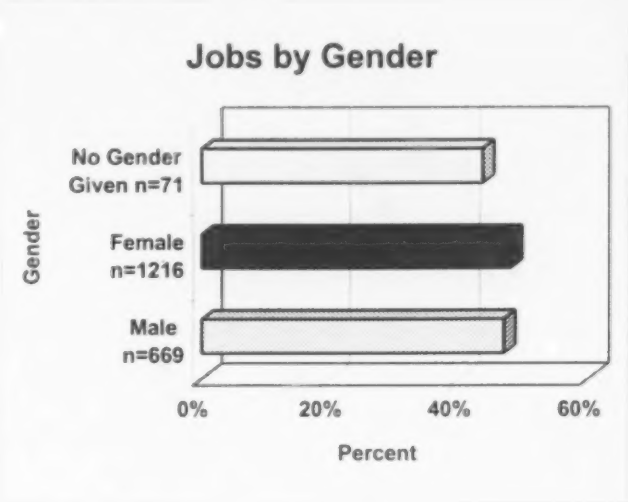


Figure 5-20

## Impact on Community

There was recognition among patrons that the library is an asset to the community and is a source of community pride (see Figures 5-21 through 5-24). The library is also recognized by patrons as supporting and contributing to the prosperity of the local community.

| Region | Percent | Number Choosing | Totals by Region |
|---|---|---|---|
| Southern n=328 | 91% | 298 | 328 |
| Central n=1093 | 93% | 1014 | 1093 |
| Northern n=535 | 93% | 498 | 535 |

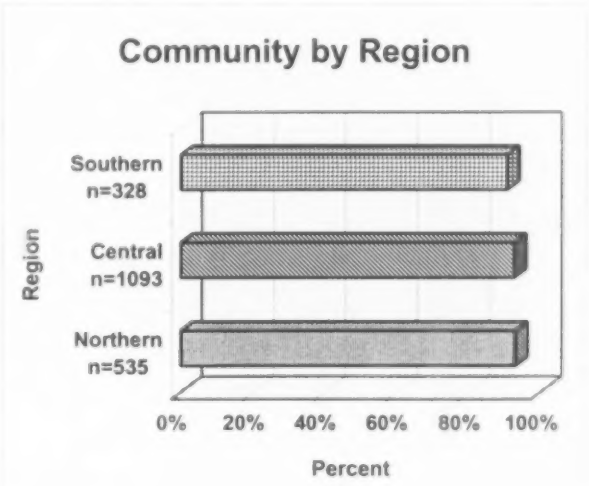


Figure 5-21

| Subregion | Percent | Number Choosing | Totals by Sub-region |
|---|---|---|---|
| Rural n=479 | 93% | 447 | 479 |
| Suburban n=1075 | 93% | 997 | 1075 |
| Urban n=402 | 91% | 366 | 402 |

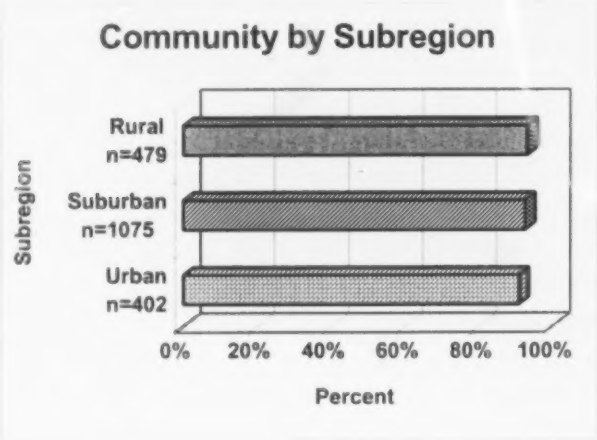


Figure 5-22

| Age | Percent | Number Choosing | Totals by Age Group |
|---|---|---|---|
| No Age Given n=17 | 35% | 6 | 17 |
| 56-up n=785 | 95% | 747 | 785 |
| 36-55 n=747 | 94% | 700 | 747 |
| 18-35 n=407 | 88% | 357 | 407 |

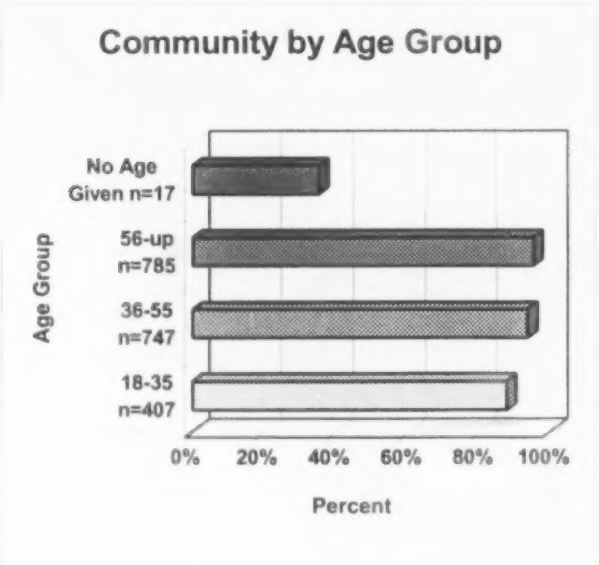


Figure 5-23

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| Gender | Percent | Number Choosing | Totals by Gender |
|---|---|---|---|
| No Gender Given n=71 | 83% | 59 | 71 |
| Female n=1216 | 92% | 1122 | 1216 |
| Male n=669 | 94% | 629 | 669 |

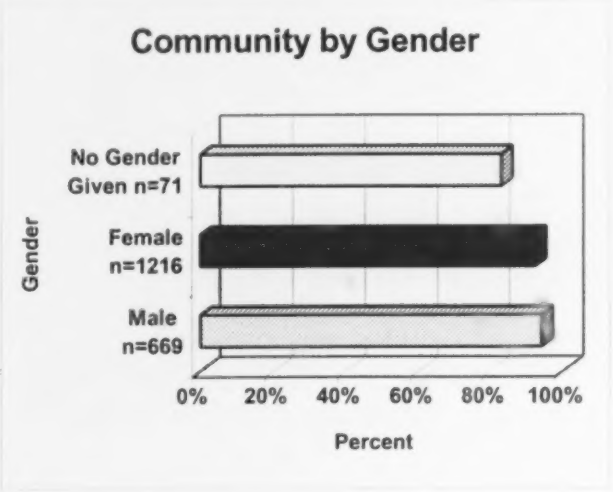


Figure 5-24

## Library Income

Income data from the *2000 Florida Libraries Directory with Statistics* was used to analyze a portion of the project data. For the 120 library outlets that responded with patron surveys, we compared certain survey data with income data available for the 47 corresponding library systems. In order to analyze the data, the library systems were split into two groups: top ten and bottom ten, based on systems with the highest (top) and lowest (bottom) total income and per capita income (see Figures 5-25 through 5-27).

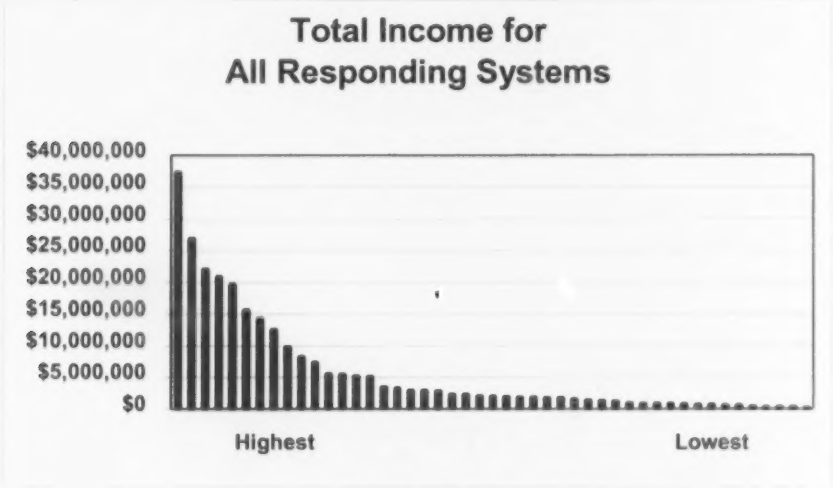


Figure 5-25

The chart above represents total annual income for all 47 responding systems.

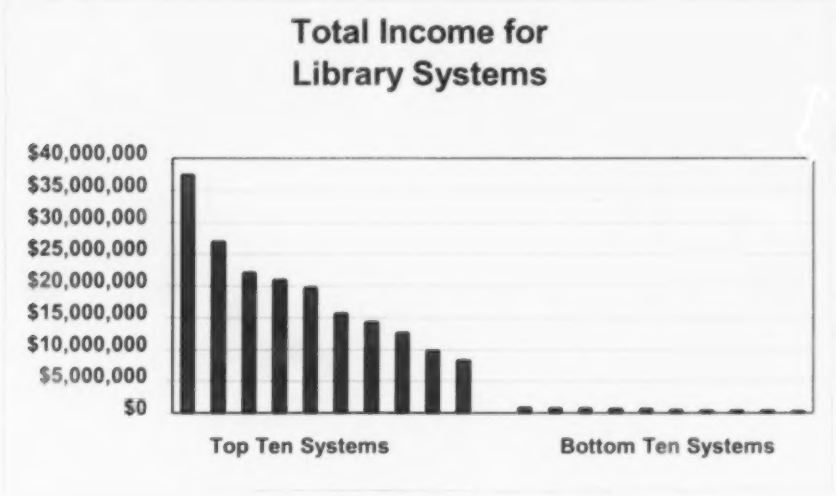


**Figure 5-26**

The ten highest total income library systems and the ten lowest of those with library outlets that responded with patron surveys are graphed in the chart above.

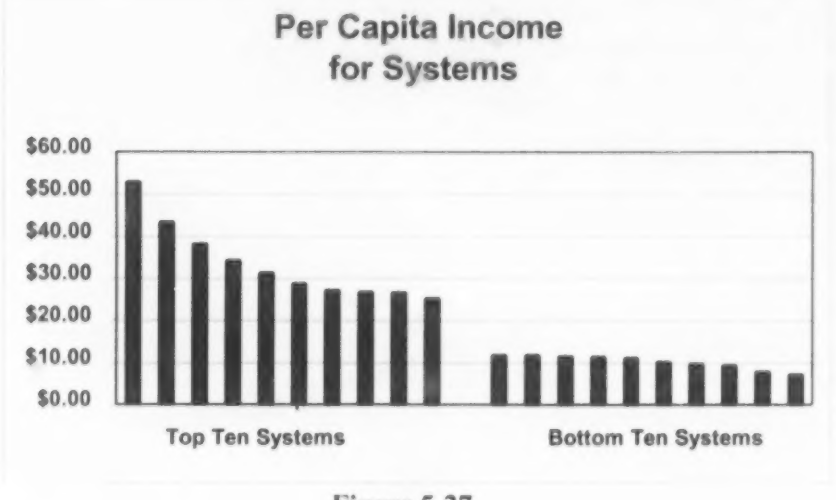


**Figure 5-27**

Of the libraries that responded, the ten highest per capita libraries and the ten lowest per capita libraries were graphed in the chart above.

The total income and per capita income data for the top ten and bottom ten libraries were crosstabulated with the economic benefits and impacts section of the survey (see Figures 5-28 through 5-39). The categories included: education, computers, local business, civic involvement, your job, and community.

| Total Income | Percent | Number choosing | Total by Group |
|---|---|---|---|
| Bottom ten libraries | 54% | 108 | 199 |
| Top ten libraries | 69% | 533 | 773 |

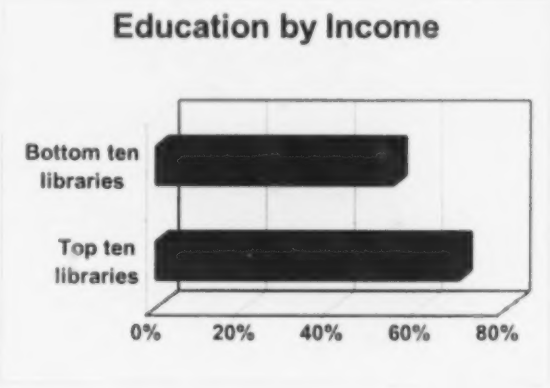


**Figure 5-28**

Figure 5-28 shows that use of the library to support education is seen as a benefit by patrons in both high-income and low-income libraries.

| Per Capita Income | Percent | Number choosing | Total by Group |
|---|---|---|---|
| Bottom ten libraries | 67% | 247 | 367 |
| Top ten libraries | 64% | 248 | 386 |

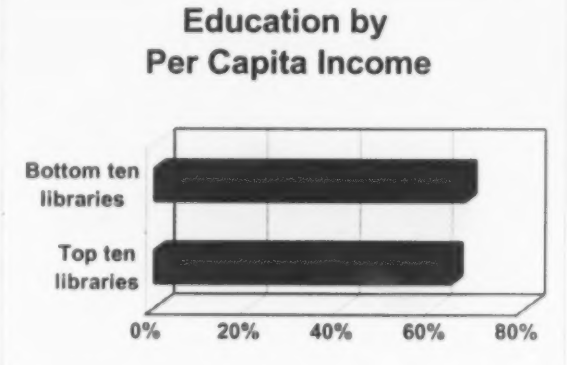


**Figure 5-29**

Figure 5-29 shows that use of the library to support education is seen as a benefit by patrons in both high per capita income and low per capita income libraries.

| Total Income | Percent | Number choosing | Total by Group |
|---|---|---|---|
| Bottom ten libraries | 65% | 130 | 199 |
| Top ten libraries | 62% | 480 | 773 |

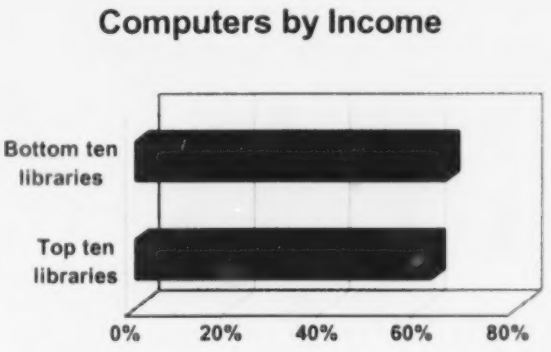


**Figure 5-30**

Figure 5-30 shows that the use of computers for email, to gather information about a potential consumer purchase, and to gain or to increase existing computer skills, is common among patrons in both high-income and low-income libraries.

| Per Capita Income | Percent | Number choosing | Total by Group |
|---|---|---|---|
| Bottom ten libraries | 57% | 210 | 367 |
| Top ten libraries | 60% | 231 | 386 |

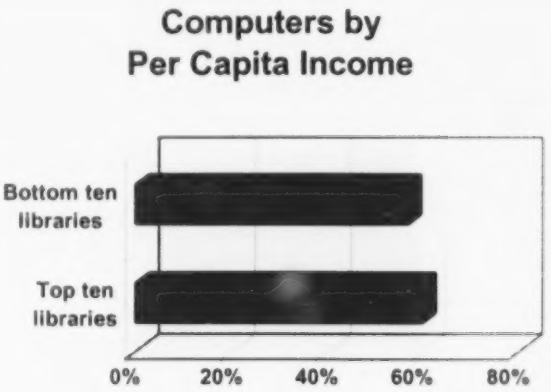


**Figure 5-31**

Figure 5-31 shows that the use of computers for email, to gather information about a potential consumer purchase, and to gain or to increase existing computer skills is common among patrons in both high per capita income and low per capita income libraries.

| Total Income | Percent | Number choosing | Total by Group |
|---|---|---|---|
| Bottom ten libraries | 23% | 46 | 199 |
| Top ten libraries | 33% | 252 | 773 |

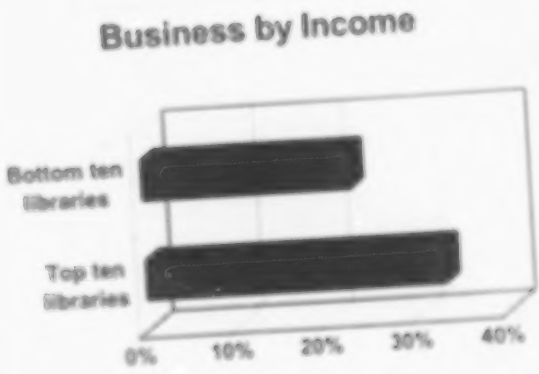


Figure 5-32

Figure 5-32 shows that though the percent of those selecting a business topic is not as high as some of the other topics it still received a recognizable amount of attention from patrons in both high-income and low-income libraries.

| Per Capita Income | Percent | Number choosing | Total by Group |
|---|---|---|---|
| Bottom ten libraries | 33% | 119 | 367 |
| Top ten libraries | 28% | 106 | 386 |

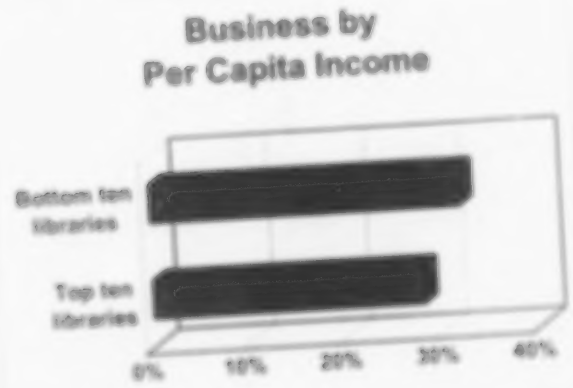


Figure 5-33

Figure 5-33 shows that though the percent of those selecting a business topic is not as high as some of the other topics it still received a recognizable amount of attention from patrons in both high per capita income libraries and low per capita income libraries.

| Total Income | Percent | Number choosing | Total by Group |
|---|---|---|---|
| Bottom ten libraries | 60% | 119 | 199 |
| Top ten libraries | 52% | 405 | 773 |

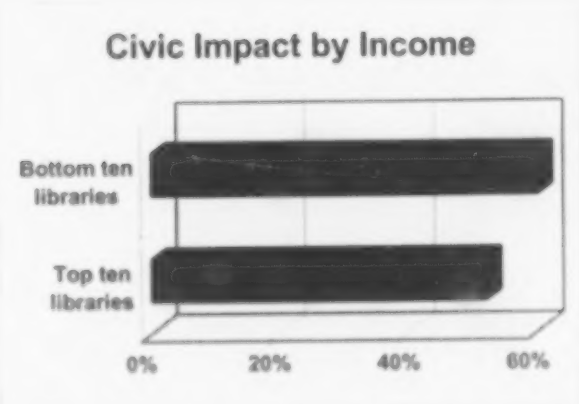


Figure 5-34

Figure 5-34 shows that patrons from both low-income and high-income libraries feel their library is civic minded.

| Per Capita Income | Percent | Number choosing | Total by Group |
|---|---|---|---|
| Bottom ten libraries | 58% | 213 | 367 |
| Top ten libraries | 51% | 196 | 386 |

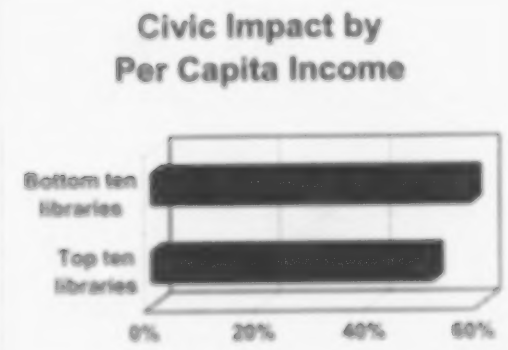


Figure 5-35

Figure 5-35 shows that patrons from both low per capita income and high per capita income libraries feel their library is civic minded.

| Total Income | Percent | Number choosing | Total by Group |
|---|---|---|---|
| Bottom ten libraries | 46% | 92 | 199 |
| Top ten libraries | 48% | 374 | 773 |

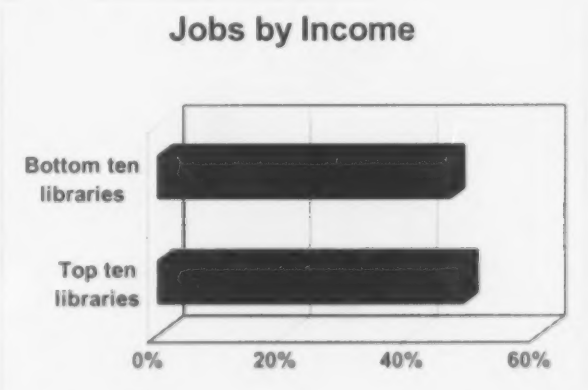


Figure 5-36

Figure 5-36 shows that it is evident that patrons from both high-income and low-income libraries realize how their jobs benefit from services available to them through their library.

| Per Capita Income | Percent | Number choosing | Total by Group |
|---|---|---|---|
| Bottom ten libraries | 49% | 180 | 367 |
| Top ten libraries | 49% | 190 | 386 |

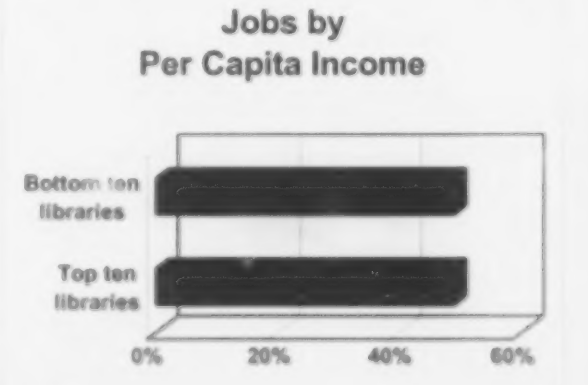


Figure 5-37

Figure 5-37 shows that it is evident that patrons from both high per capita income and low per capita income libraries recognize how their jobs benefit from services available to them through their library.

| Total Income | *Percent* | Number choosing | Total by Group |
|---|---|---|---|
| Bottom ten libraries | 96% | 192 | 199 |
| Top ten libraries | 97% | 744 | 773 |

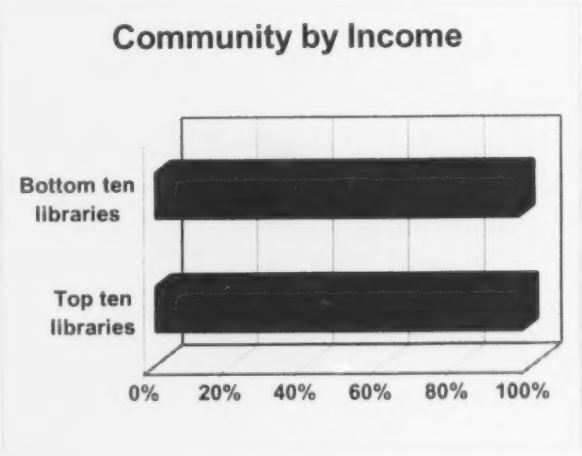


**Figure 5-38**

Figure 5-38 shows that there is recognition amorg patrons of both high-income and low-income libraries that the library is an asset to the community, and is a source of community pride.

| Per Capita Income | Percent | Number choosing | Total by Group |
|---|---|---|---|
| Bottom ten libraries | 96% | 352 | 367 |
| Top ten libraries | 98% | 379 | 386 |

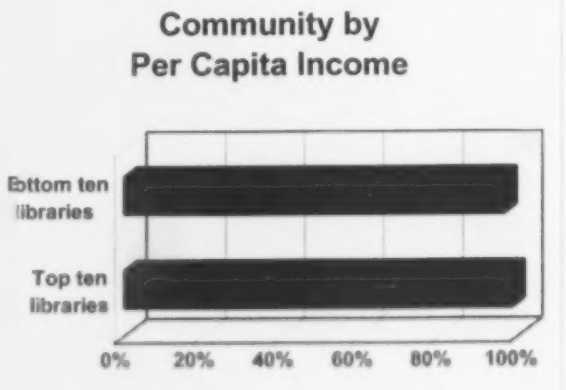


**Figure 5-39**

Figure 5-39 shows that there is recognition among patrons of both high per capita income and low per capita income libraries that the library is an asset to the community, and is a source of community pride.

From the income data presented in the charts ad tables above, most of the differences among library response percentages occured when considering the total income data. Of some note, high total income librarie selected the local business category 10% more and the education category 15% more than low-income libraries. In

general, however, the response rates for libraries grouped by income were comparable to those of all responding libraries as reported earlier.

## Funding Comparisons

Public libraries in Florida are funded through local, state, federal, and other contributions as illustrated in Figure 5-40. How these resources compare with public libraries across the nation is compared in Figures 5-41 through 5-45. As the figures indicate, Florida libraries are primarily funded through local sources and overall funding of public libraries in Florida falls below the national average.

| Funding Source | |
|---|---|
| Local | 84.33% |
| State | 9.89% |
| Federal | 0.99% |
| Other | 4.79% |

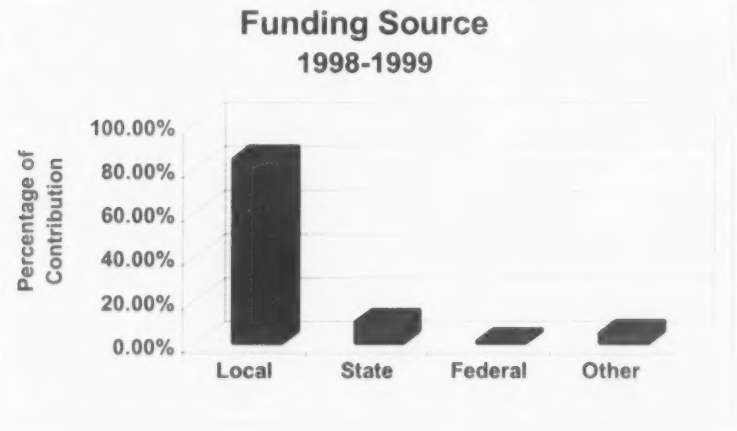


Figure 5-40

| Per Capita Income | |
|---|---|
| National | $ 24.48 |
| Florida | $ 19.83 |

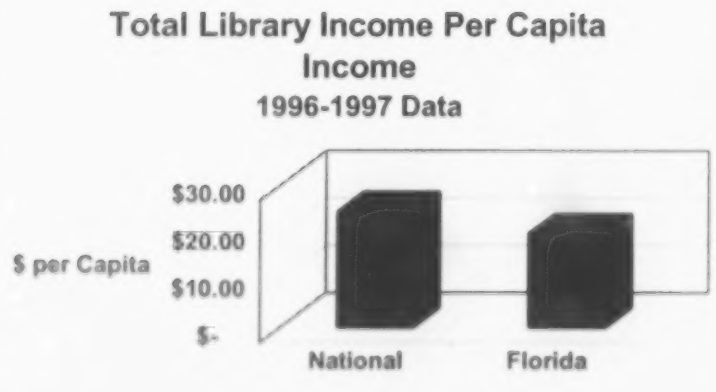


Figure 5-41

| % Local Income | |
|---|---|
| National | 77.60% |
| Florida | 82.89% |

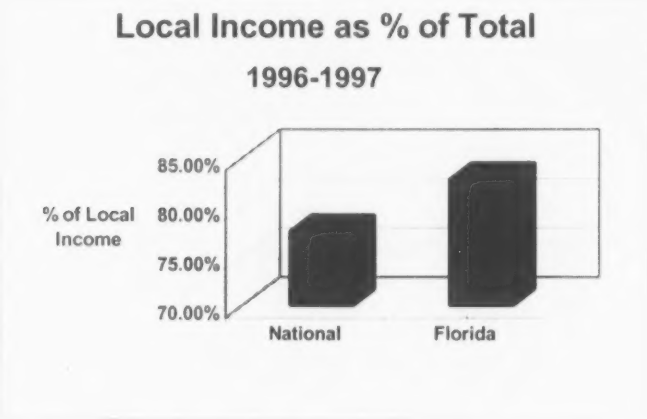


Figure 5-42

| Expenditures per Capita | |
|---|---|
| National | $ 22.88 |
| Florida | $ 18.53 |

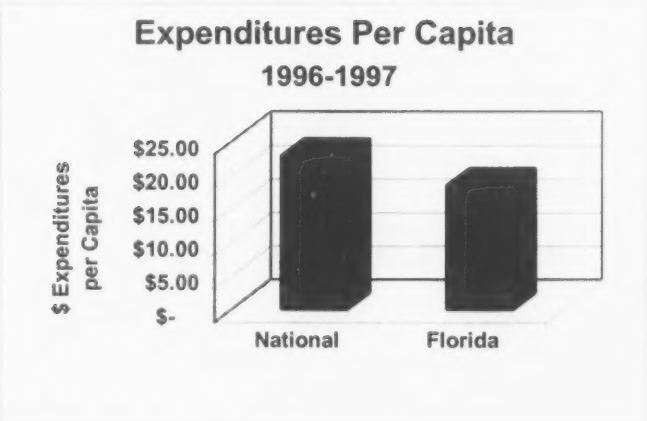


Figure 5-43

| Staff Expenditures | |
|---|---|
| National | $ 14.71 |
| Florida | $ 11.13 |

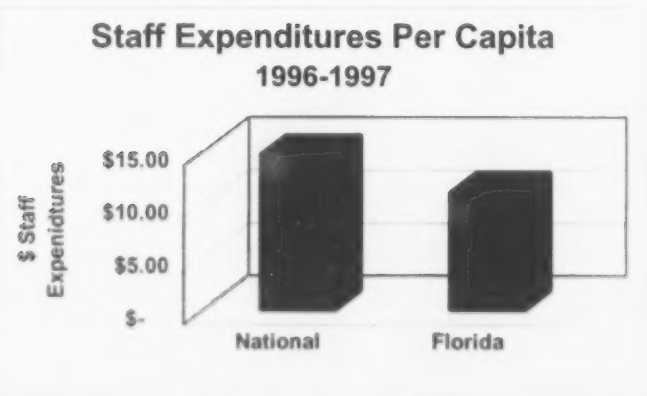


Figure 5-44

| Visits per Capita | |
|---|---|
| National | 4.13 |
| Florida | 3.57 |

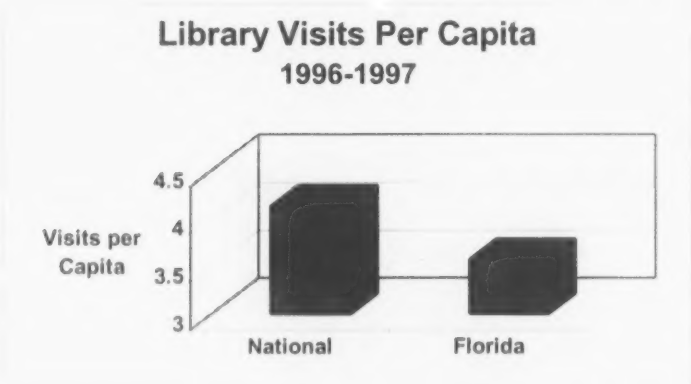


Figure 5-45

## GIS Analysis

Our final approach to survey data analysis involved the use of Geospatial Information System (GIS) tools and geographical representations of data. It was hoped that these aspects of analysis and presentation would enhance the visibility and utility of this report. However, after a variety of attempts to explore the data with GIS tools, and to depict patron responses geographically, little insight was gained that was not already evident more clearly from the analysis earlier in this report. The survey data simply did not lend itself to much geographical manipulation or to helpful association with geographically based data.

Nevertheless, we did find that one geographical depiction of survey data is particularly helpful in displaying the presence of strong, positive perceptions among library patrons. Based on the responses to question 9 in the patron survey (Appendix B)—where patrons selected from a range of possible benefits—Figure 5-46 represents the location of individual respondents who indicated the greatest perception of economic benefits from public libraries.

**Perceptions of Greatest Impact**

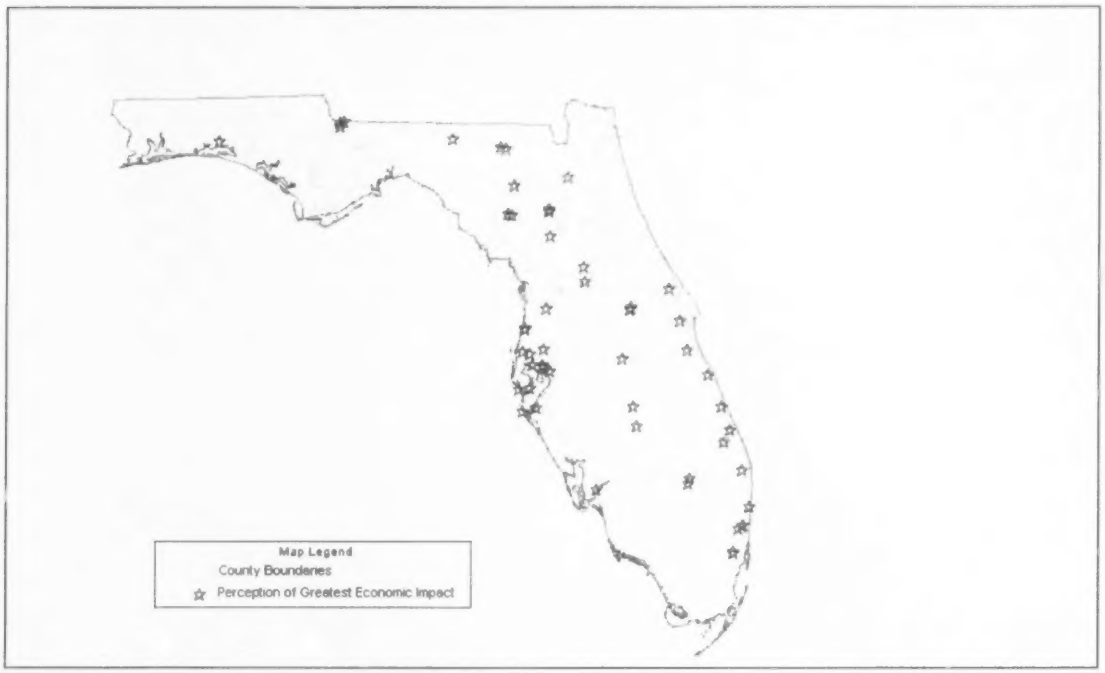


**Figure 5-46**

Patron survey question 9 is composed of seven categories of economic impacts that a library may have from the patron's perspective. Each category contains from two-to-six specific impacts which respondents could select to indicate their perceptions of beneficial impacts from public libraries. The five categories in question 9 amenable to aggregation are "Civic Involvement," "Computers," "Your Job," "Local Business," and "Education," providing respondents with up to seventeen opportunities to indicate a positive impact of the library.

Elsewhere in this chapter we have compiled and displayed the aggregated responses within each of those survey question categories for all respondents, and it is readily apparent that there is wide recognition of the broad economic value of the public library in a community. In Figure 5-46 we reflect an aggregation of responses across categories for individuals who identified 11 or more positive impacts in question 9. Approximately 2.5% of all patron survey respondents registered this strong perception of benefits from libraries, and each individual who did so is indicated by a star symbol on the map in the figure. The location of each star was determined by the library's zip code where a given respondent completed a survey. Overlapping stars indicate two or more such individuals completing surveys at the same library.



90
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## Conclusions

The study team has found that the economic impacts and benefits received from Florida's public libraries are numerous, varied, and complex (library use sometimes is and sometimes is not perceived to be an economic contribution). It was also evident that while most public librarians are at the very least interested in the economic role played by their libraries, some do not understand how to identify economic impacts—and some are not certain that stressing the development of library services with potential economic impacts is appropriate. Consequently, there are many new questions to answer and many more needs to address. In the next two chapters we lay out a number of opportunities to build on this current study, along with specific recommendations for moving forward.

Many of the economic impacts and benefits we studied can be quantified individually (e.g., personal savings on videotape and book rentals/purchases). But many others are very difficult to quantify or may never be quantified either because they are not reducible to dollar values or they are essentially impossible to measure in practical terms. For example:

- There is a psychic benefit that many patrons derive from the local library simply because it is in the community. That nonquantifiable factor at the least enhances other more specifiable benefits, though it seems to be an economic benefit for individuals in its own right.

- Public libraries' support of education at all levels (preschool through university) and types (public, private, and homeschooling) is clear. Even assuming that components of such support can be quantified in economic terms, the value of education itself, though immense and widely recognized, is very difficult to quantify without a number of assumptions.

The difficulty or impossibility of measuring some economic impacts and benefits individually does not, however, preclude reasonable estimates in the aggregate. The data and findings from this project suggest that if a variety of methods are used, then a more comprehensive understanding of public libraries' economic role can be developed. Chapter 7 of this report suggests one approach to produce such estimates.

The economic impact and benefits from public libraries in education, small business development, computer training, support to local institutions and organizations, and directly supporting individuals' well-being (to name but a few areas) are clear and profound. The public library also provides important intangible and indirect impacts and benefits, and has become increasingly vital in this era due to the reliance on—and expectation of—public access to networked information services and resources. Indeed, as the world and nation as a whole continue to move into the networked environment with increased access to a broad range of digital information, one may reasonably expect additional economic impacts and benefits to result from public library networked services and programs.

# CHAPTER VI

## STUDY RECOMMENDATIONS

### Introduction

In the report thus far, the focus has been to describe the role of public libraries in the economic development of their local communities, and to identify and describe the range of specific activities and programs in which public libraries engage to support such economic development. In this chapter the study team identifies key factors that can contribute to the success of public libraries' involvement in economic development and offer recommendations and strategies for how the State Library and public libraries in Florida might be more effective in supporting economic development activities.

### Raise Awareness

Perhaps the single most important factor that can lead to success by public libraries in economic development is widespread awareness of the library's many possible and actual roles. This includes awareness both on the part of librarians—at all levels and in all roles—and on the part of the public—patrons, trustees, and relevant government officials.

For expansion of the public's perception to occur, librarians' awareness of their own economic influence must exist first, and it must be raised sufficiently in order that libraries fulfill more of their potential. As opportunities that may have been ignored in the past are explored, and more economic impacts potentials are thus fulfilled, awareness of the library's already vital role in the community will be enhanced. Public appreciation, support, and involvement will thereby likely increase as well.

To some degree this study report and our presentation of preliminary findings at the October 2000 public library directors conference in Tallahassee provide an important step in the consciousness raising that must take place if Florida public libraries are to make a more visible impact on the economy at the local level and beyond. However, more can and should be done.

Many in the public library community are already well aware that the library plays an important, positive role in the economy, just as it does more broadly in the community. But our work suggests this is often the exception rather than the rule. The appreciation of that positive economic role is typically limited to acknowledging the economic benefits of public libraries only when they are highlighted, such as when our survey or focus group questions brought the issue to respondents' attention. However, for most librarians and for members of the public as well, the economic impacts and benefits of libraries are not *conscious* factors in the operation, administration, or use of libraries.

As a consequence, strategic plans, annual reports, public relations documents, and other expressions of the library's role in the community tend not to point out those economic benefits, which most librarians readily recognize as provided by their libraries.

One particularly noteworthy exception are the efforts made by the Miami-Dade Public Library System to emphasize the economic return on investment the system provides to its taxpayers. In a recent annual report, available at <http://www.mdpls.org/public/annualpdf.pdf>, the Miami-Dade Public Library System provides a one-page computation with this statement: "If our patrons had to buy many of the materials and services in Fiscal Year 1998-99 that the Library provided, they would have paid an estimated $154,486,621" (see Tables 2-1 and 2-2 in this report for more detail of Miami-Dade's ROI efforts). By selecting seven examples of library programs/services for the ROI calculation, this library in essence promoted a lower limit on the economic value returned from taxpayers' investment through ad valorem taxes of $24,645,113.

Different libraries may make different assumptions about what programs/services to include and what amounts should be used in any calculations. But the important point here is that the issue of economic benefits and value to the taxpayers was considered by the library system staff, and prominently displayed to its board and to the world on the Web. Using the Web in such a fashion can be a powerful mechanism for raising the awareness of library benefits. Applied awareness by librarians is critical for their patrons to understand and better appreciate all that libraries do in the economic sphere.

## Determine Emphasis on Economic Impacts

In a number of instances, library staff and directors simply had not considered the degree to which the library should have goals and objectives related to promoting economic development, being engaged in services and activities that contribute to economic benefits and impacts, and measuring and reporting those economic benefits and impacts. Indeed, in one setting library staff seemed to have very differing views as to the appropriateness of the library *consciously* engaging in services and programs that had potential economic impacts.

Although discussions about developing library plans are beyond the scope of this report, public libraries in Florida should consider integrating goals and objectives related to economic development in their planning process. The recently published *Planning for Results: A Public Library Transformation Process* (Himmel and Wilson, 1998), and *Managing for Results: Effective Resource Allocation for Public Libraries* (Nelson, Altman, and Mayo, 2000) provide excellent practical approaches for how planning and budgeting processes can be developed.

If there is formal statement in a library's plan that addresses the role of the library in supporting economic development or promoting economic impacts and benefits, then the library director may want to revisit the plan and planning process. Such formal goals

and objectives can provide an important awareness of the library's role in economic development and indicate to local government officials and others the degree to which the library is aware of this role and how they intend to support economic development in their community. A broader question, however, is the degree to which the State Library and local public libraries believe that library programs in support of economic development are important and should be encouraged as a normal part of library services.

## Develop and Maintain Key Relationships

In most communities library funding comes principally from tax collections, and unlike budget items such as schools, the library budget, because it is relatively small and normally isolated from other community agencies' budgets, can be a ripe target to bargain away when budget cuts are required. Therefore, it is essential for library directors to determine which government officials are directly responsible for library activities and funding (Leerburger, 1982), and work diligently to develop and maintain appropriate relationships. The library's liaison with local officials is very important, and this relationship should be a two-way street, where not only key officials are kept informed of library matters, but also where the library is informed of government plans or programs that may affect the library. In addition, relationships also need to be formed with public interest groups such as garden clubs, women's and men's clubs, schools, neighborhood associations, and the like (Leerburger, 1982).

With the development of key relationships in mind, the following questions (based in part on Weingand, 1998; Leerburger, 1982) should be considered by library directors as they forge these ties, and work to establish with these groups the importance of the library to the community and for economic development:

- What programs and services does my library offer to our patrons?
- Are these programs and services directly responding to identified patron needs?
- Should new programs and services be added?
- Should any programs or services be phased out?
- Should any adjustments be made in the program or service mix, lines, or items?
- What are the areas of duplication with other agencies?
- What are the opportunities for cooperation with other agencies?
- Do I know, and can I describe to my funding sources—and the community—what the library could provide if more funds were available?
- What trends can I identify in my community and how might these trends affect library operations?
- Who is the economic development officer for my city or county?
- What opportunities are there for working in conjunction with him or her?
- When was the last time I invited the economic development officer to the library for a visit and discussion of our role in the local economy?

- How can information about my library help him or her better promote my city or county?
- Does the library receive financial support from county or state sources, and if so, who controls these funds?
- What role does the State Library of Florida play, locally and statewide?
- Does the State Librarian's office exert influence or control over local or state funds?
- Who are the state representative and state senator for my library and what information do they regularly receive about the library?
- Does the Florida Legislature have a committee (or committees) concerned with library activities, and if so, who chairs this committee (or committees)?
- What are the opportunities for joining with the State Librarian, local government officials, and professional associations in providing the Florida Legislature with important information about my library, its needs, and its various roles in the community?

The answers to some of these questions may be known by some librarians, but many others need to gain more insights into their operating environment in order to further a library's development, so that it can in turn support (among other things) the economy's development. Partnerships and collaborations not only are important links for improved services provision, but they also provide opportunities to leverage and extend the impact of the library budget. Thinking of the library and its relationship to others in these terms provides an important foundation for promoting the library generally and for stimulating ways to advance its economic impact specifically.

## Conduct Additional and Continuing Research

While the research undertaken in this project revealed important insights, it also indicated many other significant avenues of research to pursue at the local, state, regional, and national levels. Continuing with research in the areas we have covered in this report will be critical for the library community to benefit and help others benefit in an economic context.

We have found overwhelming agreement that public libraries provide economic benefits to the community; we now also have a much richer understanding of what those benefits are. We have not yet, however, made a systematic attempt at *measuring* those benefits in a manner that is verifiable, widely applicable, and statistically defensible. In Chapter 7 of this report we provide a detailed proposal for follow-up work designed to quantitatively measure economic benefits from public libraries as a return on taxpayers' investments.

In addition to the proposed quantitative ROI study, there are numerous other research questions related to the economic benefits from public libraries that are raised by this study. The benefit of additional research should help to discover not only a deeper understanding of the economic impact of public libraries to the economy of local and

state communities, but it should also solicit the perceptions of those who do not use the programs and services of any public library. Among an array of possible questions are:

- What investments should public libraries make to provide the greatest benefits in return? Should they increase meeting space; provide more and/or faster Internet access; acquire more books and other resources; or something else?
- What types of networking and Internet services can and should public libraries provide that give economic benefit to the community? Are Tallahassee Free-Net and SEFLIN Free-Net, for example, good models for other communities to replicate, or should another model be identified and implemented?
- Does a decline in traditional user statistics actually represent an increase in benefits to patrons who are now accessing library-provided resources remotely? Can the public library decrease the number of users (as traditionally defined) and still increase the economic benefit?
- To what extent and in what manner should public libraries partner with local businesses to provide the resources needed for economic development?
- To what extent and in what manner should local libraries serve as archives of local historical materials? Can the digitization of these materials provide economic benefits within the community and beyond?
- What are the perceptions of the benefits (and the limitations) of public libraries by those who, for whatever reason, do not use the library (or do so infrequently)?
- How does the library's community benefit economically in ways not amenable to traditional economic measures?
- In the context of benefiting the surrounding community, including but not limited to economic benefits narrowly construed, what are the best practices in local library services? Which libraries have the best ratings among patrons and businesses? What makes them better than peer libraries at providing local economic benefits?

In addition to supporting research to answer these questions, we recommend that public library directors across the state engage in research locally and cooperatively so as to become more effective in supporting economic development activities. From an economic perspective, every library user represents and carries forth economic benefits from the public library. If a patron is willing to take the time and effort to use the library—whether physically or virtually—there may be an economic benefit that the patron receives from that use.

Thus, the question is how to increase uses that have the potential to result in economic benefits and impacts? This is not a new question, but the manner of approaching the question—and the type of data that would be deemed worthwhile to collect—would be different in light of increased awareness of the economic role of the library and the attendant opportunities. Library staff may want to consider offering special, targeted local exhibits, advertising, conducting special events and story hours, and investing in the resources that businesses, educators, and families will find useful economically. The key is to do so with an eye toward operating in the economic sphere.

and measuring that operation systematically in a market research fashion for the sake of service improvements and for awareness-raising.

As an example of other approaches to gaining new, economically related insights, library directors should consider:

- Tracking selected circulation and/or transaction figures which lend themselves to readily obtainable fair market value equivalents (e.g., video, music, and other multimedia loans; time or sessions spent by patrons on publicly accessible computers with Internet connections; children's storytime);
- Calculating the ROI for those programs and services; and
- Including ROI data and findings in annual reports and other updates to library boards and the local press.

There is much that can be done and needs to be done in the way of further research in this area, in both an academic context and an operational context. We have identified only the beginning of what should be a very fruitful area of study for the library community as a whole.

## Develop Training and Education Opportunities

Another set of recommendations addresses the need to provide a range of educational activities to share these economic insights and issues through formal, ongoing training sessions and seminars. Findings from the study suggest a number of areas where seminars, workshops, and courses might be developed. For example:

- Increasing the public's awareness of public library economic impacts and benefits;
- Planning and evaluation of library services and programs with potential economic benefits and impacts;
- Identifying and measuring the economic impacts and benefits from your public library; and
- Establishing community partnerships and collaborations to promote economic development.

This list is not intended to be comprehensive. Rather it suggests areas where training could be developed. In some respects, training is an extension of the awareness factor raised above. But as important as it is to be aware—and it is critical that this occur through a variety of mechanisms—it is no less important that an *understanding* of economic impacts and the roles of libraries be cultivated in structured learning environments.

Accordingly, we recommend that the State Library of Florida, perhaps in conjunction with the state's six library cooperatives, develop training modules for use in workshops and seminars to be given around the state. In addition to whatever materials

would be necessary for developing the modules, we recommend that supplementary materials and resources be made available for all librarians on the State Library's website, and that these include templates for relevant library promotional items as well as explanatory information. The State Library may also want to set up an Internet mailing list or discussion board where librarians could keep up-to-date and in contact with interested colleagues regarding these issues.

The delivery mechanisms for such training efforts are many. One approach is to develop an Internet-based program where individual modules of information and techniques related to economic development are delivered to participants via a discussion list. The American Library Association, Office of Information Technology Policy, has used this approach very effectively with tutorials on copyright law and the Uniform Computer Information Transactions Act (UCITA). Another approach is to have self-paced instructional manuals on the State Library's website. And, of course, traditional workshops, short courses, and seminars can be offered around the state in a face-to-face format.

Finally, an educational effort should be mounted to better share information, strategies, measurement techniques, and other knowledge about economic impacts resulting from library services. The State Library would be an excellent candidate to provide this clearinghouse function. The study team oftentimes heard study participants suggest economic development strategies and programs that other librarians had not considered but thought were excellent ideas. There is no need to re-invent programs, measurement techniques, and other good ideas being implemented in the state. One central clearinghouse of such information would benefit all public libraries.

## Initial Practical Steps

For public libraries wishing to take immediate practical steps to enhance their role in supporting economic development, a number of steps can be taken:

- Appoint a person in the library who will have responsibility for promoting the role of the library in economic development.
- Develop a written plan with goals, objectives, budget, activities, a timeline, and evaluation related to promoting library economic development efforts.
- Create new programs and services or augment existing ones that are especially likely to result in economic benefits and impacts, e.g., job referral centers.
- Establish linkages between and among the library with businesses and other organizations interested in economic development.
- Identify specific economic development impacts and benefits that result from the library using methods and data collection techniques as outlined in this report.
- Make known the economic benefits and impacts that result from the library, be that via written reports, presentations to the library board, local officials, and your local government.

Clearly, a range of other initiatives can be developed as well. *Helping Business: The Library's Role in Community Economic Development* (Bleiweis, 1977), *Report on the Economic and Social Benefits of the [Vancouver] Public Library* (John, 1997), and *The Library's Contribution to Your Community: A Resource Manual for Libraries to Document their Social and Economic Contribution to the Local Community* (Southern Ontario Library System, 1998) all provide excellent and practical approaches for public libraries to enhance their role in supporting economic development and produce economic benefits and impacts for their community.

## Moving Forward

The recommendations offered in this chapter provide a beginning point for public libraries in Florida to better integrate themselves into the economic development context of Florida. To some degree, public libraries in the state are only beginning to realize the importance of their role in providing economic benefits and impacts to both the local community and to the state overall. Findings suggest that local government officials welcome an increased role of the public library in economic development. Indeed, only as a result of this study did a number of patrons, librarians, and local officials realize the degree to which the library already was involved in supporting economic development. Thus, some broad-based program initiatives such as the following should be considered.

### Implement a Strategic Program of Economic Development Activities

To continue this momentum specific initiatives need to be established. A first approach is to implement a strategic program of activities developed among State Library of Florida officials, public library directors, the library cooperative directors, and local government officials. This strategic program should:

- Identify specific goals and objectives for Florida public libraries to encourage economic development and promote services and programs that result in economic benefits and impacts, both locally and statewide.
- Clarify the roles of the State Library, library directors, coops, and others in meeting these goals and objectives.
- Budget specific resources to accomplish the goals and objectives.
- Develop a schedule of activities and a timeline for when specific activities and programs are to occur.
- Establish a program of ongoing (formative) evaluation that can help direct and refine the effectiveness of the activities.
- Create a public awareness effort to inform Florida residents, government officials, librarians, and others of the amount and extent of economic impacts and benefits resulting from public library programs and services.

Given the current priorities for promoting the economic development of Florida by the Florida Secretary of State, such an initiative is likely to receive support.

Now may be an especially good time to propose to the legislature—either as part of the State Library budget or as a separate program within the Department of State—a proposal for enhancing the role of public libraries to promote economic development. Such a proposal might be linked to work currently underway by the Florida IT Task Force http://www.itflorida.com/. As public libraries continue to move successfully into the networked environment (Bertot and McClure, 2000), a host of opportunities exist for public libraries to develop economic programs and services and use the network and various high-speed information technologies to provide such programs and services. Such an effort is clearly in the best interests of the state of Florida and the legislature may be amenable to supporting such an effort.

### Award LSTA Grants for Economic Development

A second initiative that the State Library can develop is to encourage libraries to apply for LSTA grants in the forthcoming year that address promoting the role of the public library in economic development. It may be possible to establish this area as a priority for LSTA funding to encourage proposals that address economic development issues. Proposals could be encouraged that experiment with innovative models of cooperation with local businesses and organizations, or that plan new services and activities with potential economic impacts and benefits. In short, the State Library could energize a number of projects through use of LSTA funding.

### Support Continued Research

The third initiative is to continue funding support for the research efforts that have been reported here by continuing the research as outlined in Chapter 7. While much progress has been made, there is still much work to be done. The study approach outlined in Chapter 7 takes advantage of what we have learned thus far and offers a means to estimate dollar values for economic benefits and impacts that result from public library services and activities. Without such research we will not be able to move beyond the descriptive information provided in this report. Thus, support for research efforts to address research questions outlined earlier in this chapter and as described in Chapter 7 are essential to move forward in this area. The study team would welcome the opportunity of meeting with State Library staff to discuss these proposals.

## Enhancing the Role of Public Libraries in Economic Development

These initiatives provide a base by which the State Library of Florida and the public library community in Florida can move forward in identifying and measuring the

economic benefits and impacts that result from public library programs and services. Further, they offer strategies and recommendations to increase both the library community's and the public's awareness of the role of public libraries in economic development. To some degree public libraries short-change themselves by not making the public aware of the economic impacts and benefits they provide. It is important to continue the momentum developed by the initial project as reported here. It is important to continue to increase the public awareness of the role of public libraries in local and statewide economic development. And it is important for public libraries to continue to extend and develop this role as the state of Florida builds and strengthens its future economy.

# CHAPTER VII

# PROPOSED STUDY TO MEASURE PUBLIC LIBRARY ECONOMIC IMPACTS

## Introduction

Libraries offer a wide range of benefits beyond the traditional resources such as books, newspapers, and magazines to include such things as Internet access, after-school programs, homeschool assistance, and information in multimedia form. With libraries offering an increasing array of programs and services, the development of a study that can measure the taxpayer return on investment (ROI) is one approach to gain a better sense of what the economic impact of a library is to a community.

The purpose of this chapter is to offer one possible approach to design and implement a study that can measure the taxpayer return on investment from investments in the public library to better understand the economic impacts that result from those investments. The approach proposed in this chapter is based on findings from the study described in this report as well as additional work the study team completed in reviewing other work in this area, conversations with economists that specialize in this area, and some initial pretesting of data collection instruments that the study team completed as part of the study described in this report.

## Background Topics and Issues

Economists have estimated the regional impacts and social returns realized through the provision of public education institutions such as public high schools or universities. Like libraries, the return on investment in public education institutions is difficult to measure. Economists have used contingent valuation methods as well as economic impact analysis to determine the value of these public institutions. For instance, attempts have been made to estimate neighborhood school worth by examining differentials in local property values (Bogart and Cromwell, 1997; Bogart and Cromwell, 2000).

Contingent valuation (CV) methodology is often used for placing monetary values on goods and services not bought and sold in the marketplace. It is survey based and constructs scenarios that offer possible future actions. Respondents are asked to state their preferences among these different government actions. The choices are then analyzed in a manner similar to those made by consumers in actual markets (Carson, 1999). The simplest and most common use of the CV format offers respondents a binary choice between two alternatives, one the status quo, and the other an alternative that has a greater cost than maintaining the status quo. Directly related to these choice alternatives are willingness to pay (WTP) measures, where the respondent specifies an amount worth

spending to acquire a good, and willingness to accept (WTA), where the respondent makes valuations in terms of giving up a good (Carson, 1999).

Use of CV methods in an attempt to measure the contributions of public libraries using economic impact analysis, and cost-benefit analysis have been done, but there is debate concerning its use. The debate has primarily been on the choice of the format used to obtain information. For example, a distinct question choice versus an open-ended question that asks for WTP for a good can result in different estimates, with distinct choices tending to result in higher estimates than open-ended questions. Also, the CV survey should have scenarios that are clear and are accurately described, and the tradeoffs must be credible (Carson, 1999).

The effort to determine library uses has been an important first step in deciding what exactly should be considered in any valuation model used. An economic impact analysis is essentially an attempt to quantify the value a good provides to the community and to consumers from outside the region. While it is recognized that a library generally does not attract new money to an area, their resources are increasingly being accessed from outside its traditional geographic service area via the Internet.

Cost-benefit analysis is one way that has been used to determine the net benefits, the benefit-cost ratio, and the internal rate of return for libraries because it considers both the benefits and costs of the existence of the library within the community. Like economic impact analysis, cost-benefit analysis provides a quantitative presentation of the returns to a community's library investment. The logic for using cost-benefit analysis is that it is a method that can be easily understood by non-specialists.

Benefits are defined both directly and indirectly and are assigned a monetary value as appropriate. Direct benefits are simply the value of the services realized by the users of public libraries. Indirect (or secondary) benefits are those generated from the existence of the library on non-users or the community at large. For example, an entrepreneur may use a library's resources to gather information for the purpose of establishing a new business. As such, the entrepreneur directly benefits from the provision of the service. If the entrepreneur does establish the business after obtaining relevant information from the library, and hires workers from the surrounding community to work in the new firm, then these workers receive indirect benefits. Additionally, society in general receives indirect benefits, since more people are working and more income tax revenue is being generated.

Other examples of indirect benefits may include increased productivity by researchers, computer access to outsiders, and business development in the area. If it is determined that public libraries pass the cost-benefit analysis threshold with the value of the direct benefits generated exceeding the direct costs of library provision, then the economic return estimated by the study can be considered a conservative approximation of the actual social return realized by having public libraries. Then, it can credibly be argued that although we cannot measure all indirect benefits, their positive value would increase the overall return.

To determine the economic benefit of public libraries, economic impact analysis alone is inappropriate because libraries do not generally attract users from outside the community where the library resides. Cost-benefit analysis also has some difficulties, such as data collection and the forming of credible value estimates based on that information; however, the methodology is applicable to the problem of valuing.

The first step in determining the impact of direct and indirect benefits of public libraries is the development of surveys aimed at identifying the direct and indirect benefits patrons realize from access to public libraries. Direct and indirect benefits can be identified, evaluated, and listed through survey questions and a qualified statement regarding their value can be presented.

## Direct Benefits

While measuring the economic benefits that the public receives from public libraries is difficult, it is not without merit to do so, since it is an undertaking that serves a worthwhile purpose (Holt, Elliot, and Moore, 1999). The Holt et al. study (1999) established that for every $1 of tax revenue invested in the Saint Louis Public Library System, users received more than $4 in *direct* benefits.

Using a telephone survey the Holt study was able to have patrons assign a specific value to the services they receive. This articulation of the value patrons placed on certain programs and services has been a definite step in the right direction for measuring the economic impact of public libraries. However, the Holt study did not place a value on some services that we feel should be included, such as children's storytime. While it is true, as in the Holt study, that patrons could receive this same service free from a local retail bookstore for instance, the service could still have a dollar amount attached to it by patrons and therefore should be considered as an economic benefit.

The placing of a value on as many services and benefits as possible will assist public libraries in demonstrating the return that taxpayers receive for the dollars they invest in their libraries. With this in mind the pilot survey developed by the Information Institute for this project (see Appendix F) used information gathered from focus groups, director surveys, and patron surveys to incorporate several programs and services on a three-page survey. While we do not consider this survey to be all-inclusive we think it is a good starting point for placing a value on the programs and services that public libraries offer in the state of Florida.

Researchers using a scripted prompt sheet will have patrons respond to the items and place a dollar value in terms of payment in additional taxes on the programs and services according to their worth to them in one part, and in another part patrons will be prompted to respond how much in reduced taxes they would expect if some programs and services were not available. The information gathered can help researchers determine a reasonable value to use for each program and service, and determine the programs or

services that patrons place the highest priority on regardless of its overall economic benefit.

One measurement of the economic benefit received by patrons can be viewed in terms of the amount of savings the patron receives from a program or service versus what it would cost them to pay for a program or service from a competitor. This is described as consumer surplus, the value that consumers place on the consumption of goods or services in excess of what they must pay to get them (Holt, Elliot, and Moore, 1999).

In Holt et al. (1999), for example, researchers sought to compare the number of books people borrow from the library with the number of books they would purchase if this library service were not available to determine the consumer surplus. We believe that while comparing the dollar amount that patrons are willing to pay for a library's program and services with what it would cost in the marketplace to buy is a valid measurement to use, and that other ways should be used in conjunction with this method of evaluation to obtain a truer picture of the economic benefits that the public receives for its investment of tax dollars.

## Developing Different Measures for Direct Benefits

Another way of determining the value, or return on tax payer investment is to survey patrons, have them attach a dollar value that they would be willing to pay for the program or service they receive from the library, and then in simple terms state this valuation as an economic benefit. This straightforward method would produce a fair estimate of taxpayer return on their investment in public libraries, since most library programs and services are offered for free, and they would be costly in the marketplace, they already represent a direct saving to patrons who use them. This survey information could be used to determine the practical savings that patrons receive from using the programs and services. One significant benefit of this method is that with items where there is no other market alternative, the library can place an economic value or benefit on that program or service and calculate the economic benefit being received.

While we could readily place a market value on some programs and services such as Internet access or video rentals/purchases using the marketplace as stated above, it is the value the patron places on the program or service that represents a truer valuation of the program or service. For instance, if a patron values access to the Internet at $10 per month, then that is the value we would place on that service for that individual patron using the service per month. This would be a reasonable valuation method for the service since a number of Internet service providers charge monthly fees. Also, if a patron placed a value of $1 on videos, then that is the value placed on each video that is borrowed from the library.

Using values placed on each program or service included in the survey, and additional items recognized by patrons in open-ended responses, the total practical economic value of taxpayer investment in libraries could then begin to be assessed. For

example, using a $1 dollar value for videos a library that loans on average 10 videos per day would be able to assign an economic benefit to patrons of $3,650 dollars a year to videos.

While the example of Internet usage and video rental have market competitors and the fair market value could be obtained and used for calculating economic value, many items that should be valued do not have market competitors, and the value the patron places on the program or service will be necessary for the calculation of economic benefits. For example, patrons who use the library for assistance in homeschooling their children is a category that potentially could have a high rate of return on taxpayer investment in the state of Florida since there were 33,219 children being home schooled in the state during the 98-99 school year (Florida Department of Education, 2000). So if a valuation could be done for as many programs and services as possible using the value patrons place on them, a better determination of the return taxpayers receive on their investment in Florida public libraries programs and services could be achieved.

## Indirect Benefits

The term indirect benefit is used to reflect the benefit that third parties or the population as a whole derive when individuals use the services of a public institution (Holt, Elliot, and Moore, 1998). When considering public libraries, there are numerous instances where third parties receive benefits from the use of programs or services by others. Consider that public libraries support and promote literacy in their community, support students engaged in formal educational learning, and make available free Internet access providing the public the benefits associated with the Internet. While it is understood that the measurement of indirect benefits received by public libraries is difficult, and in some cases nearly impossible, we feel that many can at least be conservatively measured.

The struggle to measure indirect benefits is not a new undertaking as it has been attempted in other areas with some success. For instance, the measuring of social goods such as education has sought to measure the indirect benefits that education affords society as a whole. The public library has long been established as an educational institution (Summers, Fraser, Landry, and Burnett, 1999) and certainly some of the measures of indirect benefits in education could apply to the library. Another effort to determine indirect benefits can be found in the measurement of workforce development, which has sought to include the return on investment not only for the individual but also for the government, and for society (Norris and King, 1997).

Also, we find there is an increasing body of work to measuring indirect benefits in the area of environmental economics. Research on existence value, which is an individual's willingness to pay for a change (or to avoid a change) in the provision of a resource with no prospects or no intention of enjoying services from the resource, is an effort to use cost-benefit analysis to include previously unmeasured ambiguous benefits. (Madariaga and McConnell, 1987).

The measurement of these nonuse benefits has been of interest to those concerned with the preservation of water resources. Additionally environmental research has also focused on non-consumptive use of wildlife resources such as viewing wildlife and valuing the pure existence of wildlife, by developing a model of total value that incorporates non-consumptive use, indirect use, and existence as arguments in an individuals choice set (Boyle and Bishop, 1987). What is needed is the development of additional methods to determine the direct as well as the indirect benefits of public libraries.

The indirect benefits provided by public libraries are numerous and can be seen as having value, even those that are not easily measured. For instance, advertisers are the recipients of indirect benefits whenever a library patron reads a newspaper or magazine. This method of exposure to advertising is referred to as pass-along readership—those persons who read the same publication as the initial recipient (Hahn and Mangun, 1997). When advertisers place print ads these readers are considered and have a value placed on them by the advertiser, they understand the value of any exposure to print-ads and they spend millions each year to expose consumers to their products.

Another indirect benefit for advertisers that can be generated by public libraries is found in the usage of the Internet. Advertisers are expected to spend $3.8 billion this year promoting everything from organizations to products on the Internet (Schumann and Thorson, 1999). The importance of this benefit can be emphasized by the fact that in 1999, not only did nearly half of Florida public libraries have their catalogs available on-line, but there were also 1,988 computers available for the public (Summers, Fraser, Landry, and Burnett, 1999).

While library patrons who use the Internet are primarily interested in using it to send and receive e-mail, research information, and for entertainment, our survey of patrons revealed some using library Internet access for shopping. These users are making airline reservations, buying and selling stocks and mutual funds, and purchasing many other products and services. Directly related to patrons using the Internet for shopping is their using it to research consumer information in order to make more informed purchases, giving an indirect benefit to the manufacturer of the product being purchased over their competitor.

Other patrons are using the Internet to research ways to expand their existing business. Indirect benefits from public libraries are delivered when patrons use the library resources to obtain needed information for starting a new business, or when the library performs the function of a cultural center and holds special events such as art shows. In the case of establishing a new business, an indirect benefit would occur in the hiring of workers due to the business being established, and the additional tax revenue being generated by the business. For special events there is an indirect benefit to taxpayers when the library acts as a cultural center, since tax dollars are not being used to establish a separate facility for this purpose.

As noted above there are numerous instances where libraries contribute to indirect

benefits. The development of a study framework that will begin the task of obtaining a conservative estimate of the taxpayers return on their investment in public libraries through indirect as well as direct benefits will create a more complete picture of the contribution that libraries make in a community.

As previously stated the measurement of economic benefits should consider both direct and indirect benefits, with benefits being assigned a monetary value that is appropriate. The first task in the determining of direct and indirect is the development of surveys aimed at identifying the direct and indirect benefits patrons realize from access to public libraries. The articulation of the value patrons placed on certain programs and services from previous studies such as Holt, is a step in the right direction, and should be expanded to include services such as children's storytime, that were not included in the Holt study. The measurement of as many direct and indirect benefits as possible is important because in the case of public libraries, there are numerous instances where third parties receive benefits from the use of programs or services by others.

The effort to measure indirect benefits is not new and it has been attempted in areas such as education. Other efforts to determine indirect benefits can be found in the measurement of workforce development (Norris and King, 1997), and environmental research on the non-consumptive use of wildlife resources (Boyle and Bishop, 1987). The development of surveys based on existence value research is an effort to use cost-benefit analysis to include previously unmeasured benefits (Madariaga and McConnell, 1987) and can be used to help determine the economic benefits received from library programs and services. For example, library patrons use the Internet for sending and receiving email, for shopping, or to expand their existing business, and they receive direct and indirect benefits from this use that would have an economic value placed on the benefits received.

## Framework for the Proposed Study

The topics and issues described in the previous section suggest that the general topic of measuring economic impacts and benefits for public goods such as public libraries resulting from taxpayer support is complex. Indeed, there is still considerable controversy surrounding the topic and how best one might proceed in such a study. Given this complexity and controversy, the study team used the following criteria as a basis for developing the proposed study framework:

- Understandability: the framework should highlight factors and approaches that are most likely to be easily understood by the public library community and policymakers.

- Most important impacts: attempts should be made to measure *all* types of direct and indirect economic impacts, but given the difficulty in doing so the study team believes that measuring those that appear to be *most important* should receive primary attention.

- Approximation of measures: the framework may not be able to produce exact measurements of impact, but reliable estimates of such impacts is still much better than what we currently have.

- Feasibility: the framework should suggest an approach that is feasible and practical; that is, it can be implemented and used to produce reliable estimates of impacts.

With these criteria in mind, the study team developed a framework to direct the study that is shown in Figure 7-1.

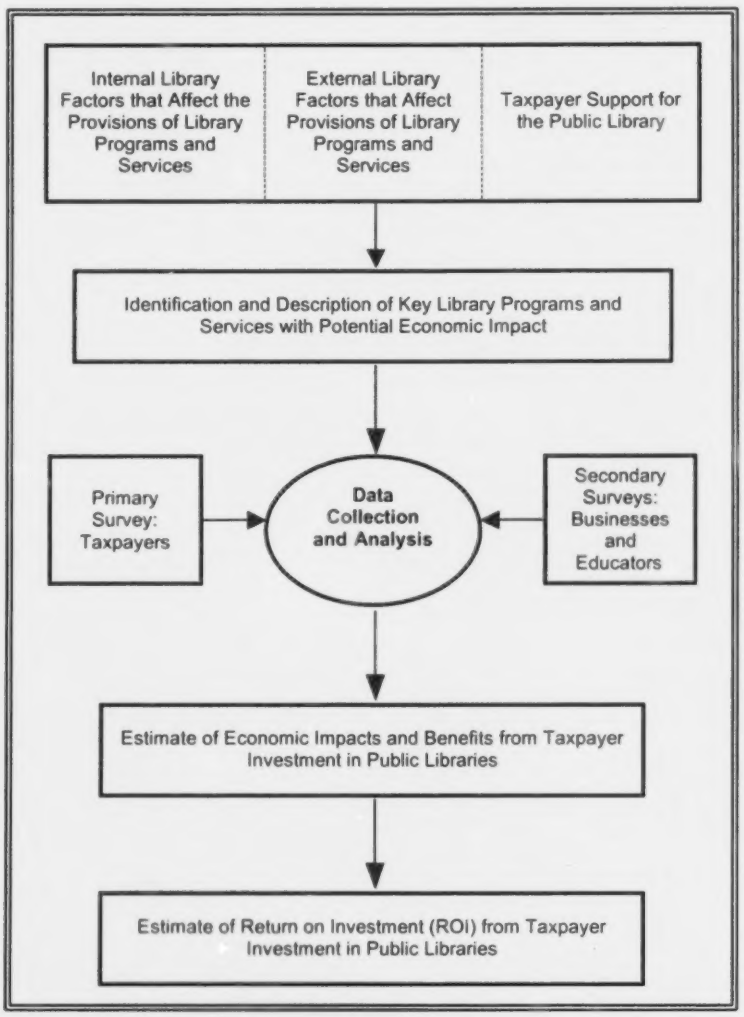
Internal Library Factors that Affect the Provisions of Library Programs and Services
External Library Factors that Affect Provisions of Library Programs and Services
Taxpayer Support for the Public Library
Identification and Description of Key Library Programs and Services with Potential Economic Impact
Primary Survey: Taxpayers
Data Collection and Analysis
Secondary Surveys: Businesses and Educators
Estimate of Economic Impacts and Benefits from Taxpayer Investment in Public Libraries
Estimate of Return on Investment (ROI) from Taxpayer Investment in Public Libraries

**Figure 7-1**
**Study Framework**



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The framework depicted in Figure 7-1 illustrates that the study should first concentrate on describing and understanding the following:

- *Internal library factors that affect the provision of library programs and services.* The findings from the current study suggest that a range of factors within the library such as selection of program and services to provide, perceived importance of supporting a library role related to promoting economic impacts, and physical layout, conditions, etc., affect the library's overall interest and support for promoting economic impacts and benefits.

- *External factors that affect the provision of library programs and services.* Again, each public library operates in an environment that may have unique or situational factors that affect its overall support for economic impacts. For example, one library may have a board of trustees that strongly encourages the director to promote economic impacts, and another board may be strongly against such types of services.

- *Taxpayer support for the public library.* This component is relatively straightforward and requires a computation of the actual annual dollar amount of local, state, and federal support that comes to the library. Thus, we should be able to say that Public Library X receives Y amount of taxpayer support per year.

Identifying and describing these components provides a context for the library's contribution to economic impacts and benefits. Clearly, additional detail can be offered to describe these components, but for purposes of the framework, they suggest an initial context for the library that is likely to vary considerable from library to library.

Given these components, libraries make decisions and choices as to what specific programs and services they will provide to their communities. Some of these programs and services have considerably greater potential economic impact and benefits than others. For example, a jobs awareness program has greater direct potential economic impact than does children's story hour. Thus, the proposed study would concentrate on identifying selected programs and services with potential economic impact and benefits amenable to investigation, rather than all possible programs and services. Chapters 4 and 5 of the report provide an initial attempt at identifying such programs and services.

As shown earlier in this chapter, economic impacts and benefits can be described as either direct or indirect. Findings reported in this study demonstrate that impacts and benefits from libraries can have both direct and indirect aspects and that the line between a direct versus indirect benefit can be blurred. Nonetheless, criteria can be proposed and will be developed that help differentiate between the two for purposes of measurement.

Data collection—which will encompass both direct and indirect benefits—will be comprised of two sets of surveys. The study team pretested one approach where respondents ascribe a dollar amount of impact from selected library services and

programs (see discussion below). This approach will be refined and combined with a CV survey method focused on tax-based valuations of the library as a whole (also discussed more fully below). Together, these approaches will constitute our proposed *primary survey*. We also propose developing and collecting data with a set of *secondary surveys*, which will be a separate refinement and extension of our pretested surveys, focusing on gathering richer data from businesses in one case, and from educators in the other. Because of the import of these two groups in the context of economic development, it is hoped that these surveys (which will probe more deeply and specifically into their respective interests and impacts) will supplement our understanding gained more broadly and generally from the primary survey.

In addition to quantitative measures there will be other qualitative indicators of impact and benefit that can be considered. Findings from the current study suggest examples of such qualitative indicators. Thus, the framework also allows for reporting both quantitative and qualitative measures and indicators of economic impacts and benefits.

Ultimately, the proposed study framework results in an estimate of economic impacts and benefits from taxpayer investment in public libraries. We consciously use the term "estimate" as we believe that any attempt, regardless of method, will necessarily result in an estimate of impacts and benefits since every approach will be based on a set of assumptions and limitations.

The framework suggests an approach for better identifying and understanding economic impacts and benefits resulting from taxpayer investment in a particular library. To produce a statewide estimate the framework would need to be scaled to accommodate all public libraries in a particular state. The approach that the study team believes has greatest potential for doing this is to devise a sampling process that will represent the make-up of public libraries in a state in terms of the FSCS categories of urban, suburban, and rural and in terms of total operating expenditures. Thus the sampling design would be similar to that shown in Figure 7-2.

| | Less than $100,000 | $100,000 to $999,999 | Greater than $1,000,000 |
|---|---|---|---|
| URBAN | *Sample Size* | *Sample Size* | *Sample Size* |
| SUBURBAN | *Sample Size* | *Sample Size* | *Sample Size* |
| RURAL | *Sample Size* | *Sample Size* | *Sample Size* |

(Sample size numbers to be determined once population is known)

**Figure 7-2**
**Proposed Sampling Design**

The sampling process will allow the study team to then estimate economic impacts on a statewide basis, assuming a representative sample based on criteria shown in Figure 7-2 or perhaps other sampling variables. What the statewide estimate will not address, however, are the range of factors at the local library that affected the degree to which that library actually contributes to economic benefits and impacts.

Finally, given the estimate of economic benefits and impacts in terms of a dollar amount—at least from services and programs that provide direct impacts—the study team can then compare that dollar amount to the total taxpayer support investment in the public library for those libraries participating in the sample:

$$\frac{\text{Dollar Estimate of Economic Impacts and Benefits}}{\text{Taxpayer Support for Public Libraries}} = \text{Return on Investment}$$

Thus, if the dollar amount between the estimate of economic benefits and impacts is greater than the taxpayer support for public libraries, then there is a positive return on investment from taxpayer support for public libraries.

The study framework depicted in Figure 7-1 is a first step toward guiding the proposed work. Clearly, there is additional work yet to be done with respect to details. However, our approach does draw upon the empirical findings from the current study as well as recent literature, and provides an initial basis by which to conduct the future study proposed in this chapter.

## Study Goals and Objectives

The purpose of the proposed study is to identify and describe the economic impacts and benefits of Florida public libraries, by focusing on the benefits and impacts that users and organizations receive from the library. Study objectives include the following.

- Describe the role of public libraries in economic development by identifying and describing key activities and programs engaged in to support economic development;
- Identify factors that contribute to the success of public library involvement in economic development;
- Refine our understanding of factors that should be considered as library-based contributions to local and state economic development and explore possible approaches and techniques to operationalize these factors so that they can be measured and quantified; and
- Offer recommendations and strategies for how public libraries in Florida might be more effective in supporting economic development.

In short, the proposed study will continue work completed to date by the study team and build upon the model and pretested methodology, using insights gained from the Information Institute's data collection and preliminary analysis.

## Survey Development for the Proposed Study Framework

We developed and pilot tested two versions of a survey instrument for the purpose of obtaining direct benefit information. The difference between the two is that one supplies interviewees with an estimation of the tax paid on average by each household in the support of public libraries in Part 2 section A, and the other does not supply this information (see Appendix F, for a copy of the survey with the tax paid estimate, and Appendix G, for a copy without the tax estimate).

Results from the pilot testing of the two versions will aid in extending and refining the survey, which would be used to approximate the return on investment from all public libraries in the state of Florida. Our approach would also develop additional surveys to obtain different measures of the value patrons place on direct benefits, and to begin the task of placing a value on the indirect benefits.

The approach we envision will use a multiple survey approach to determine the value that patrons (and others) place on public libraries. As mentioned above, two surveys were developed and pilot tested. They list programs and services offered by public libraries and ask participants to specify the amount of taxes they would be willing to pay for those programs and services and the amount of tax reduction they would expect if a program or service were eliminated. The difference between the two surveys was that one offered participants an average amount of taxes paid per household in support of public libraries, and the other did not.

Based on the feedback received from the pilot test we found that participants preferred the version that offered the average amount of taxes paid per household, and recommend that this remain a part of the revision of the survey. The survey developed in this study would be developed further so that it is more detailed and comprehensive, and similar in other key respects to the water quality survey developed by Carson and Mitchell (1989).

The Carson and Mitchell survey is expansively scripted and probes for a variety of information from the interviewee. For instance, the first section of that survey seeks general information on how the interviewee feels about spending levels in different areas. In the second section their survey seeks information on the respondent's household and activities that household members engage in concerning the water quality issue to be discussed. The third section begins the education process concerning the water quality in the area and allows the interviewee to begin thinking about the current level of water quality for the area.

The fourth section of the Carson and Mitchell survey obtains the interviewee's income range and begins a series of questions where the interviewee estimates the amount he or she would be willing to pay in increased taxes for different levels of water quality. This continues until a point is reached that the interviewee is given a tax range that his or her household might pay in annual taxes for their current water quality level. The key point is that valuation of the public good (water quality) is estimated in terms of tax amounts paid or willing to be paid for all of the services necessary to provide defined quality levels.

In the fifth section of their survey, personal questions are asked relating to the interviewee's level of education, length of residence, and race. The final piece of the survey is where the interviewer interprets how the interviewee responded to a specific set of questions in the survey.

For our proposed study, we intend to incorporate much of the methodology and rigor evidenced by Carson and Mitchell in the valuation of a particular environmental service. The effort involved in further development of our primary survey will address the concerns of those economists who hold that the measurement of taxes paid in support of libraries should be the determining factor for establishing the economic benefits of public libraries. However, our approach will develop additional, complementary survey components that will allow patrons to value individual programs and services based on what they would be willing to pay for the program or service in the marketplace. These surveys should reveal the overall value patrons place on various programs or services in terms of consumer dollars. This method would attempt to approximate how products are priced in the marketplace based on consumer demand and willingness to pay.

In addition to these efforts to measure direct and indirect benefits, we will develop a secondary set of two separately targeted surveys: one that specifically focuses on businesses, and another that specifically focuses on educators. The business survey should provide information on whether a business hired additional workers due to information obtained from the library. Likewise, the educator survey should provide information on the large variety of ways the library supports and complements educational efforts. Together with the primary survey described in the preceding paragraph, these two surveys will give us a more in-depth view of libraries' economic benefits from the perspective of two particularly important patron groups.

It should also be noted that the use of these contingent valuation methods are not without problems. Contingent valuation problems include several biases: *strategic* where the respondent answers in an attempt to influence the outcome; *information* where the respondent does not have experience in the subject being evaluated; *hypothetical* where the respondent is faced with hypothetical rather than actual choices; *starting-point* where the respondent is asked to choose from a predefined range of possibilities; *payment vehicle* where the selection of payment vehicle (i.e., taxes, higher utility payments) may influence response; *sampling* where the sampling procedure chosen may bias results; and *interviewer* where answers may be influenced by the person asking the questions (Harik, 1999). The degree of meticulousness necessary for CV results to provide useful input can

vary substantially. In addition, the respondent needs to be provided with enough information to make an informed decision without being overwhelmed by it (Carson, 1999).

## Schedule and Tasking

The study team proposes an 18-month effort to complete the project successfully. We would organize the project in a number of phases with the following key tasks:

**Preliminary Phase: Organize project sponsors and funding**. Two months. During this phase the study team will meet with various state library agencies (and perhaps other funding sources) to discuss their participation as sponsors in order to complete the study. We would detail responsibilities and level of effort for multiple sponsoring organizations to contribute equal funds toward the completion of the study as outlined in this chapter.

**Phase I: Project organization and detailed tasking**. Two months. Upon acceptance of the proposal the study team will detail tasking for all the phases described in this section. We will organize an advisory committee that will provide review, comments, and suggestions to the study team, and we will secure the services of an external consultant knowledgeable in economics of library services. We expect that Dr. Bruce Kingma, of the School of Information Studies, Syracuse University, would continue to work with us on the project as he has done with the current effort. Dr. Kingma authored and recently revised *The Economics of Information* (2001).

**Phase II: Testing of the framework**. Three Months. The framework described in Figure 7-1 will be tested, refined, and further developed to insure that it can be used successfully as a basis for data collection and analysis. Key tasks in this phase are to test the framework in a number of different library environments, determine the degree to which it can be scaled to estimate statewide economic impacts and benefits, and have an external panel of experts review the results and suggest refinements. This phase may also include site visits to public libraries (such as Jacksonville, Florida) where the library community has successfully made the case that the library contributes to the overall economic development of the community.

**Phase III: Development and testing of measures**. Four Months. A key component of the study will be developing, field-testing, and refining specific measures to describe both the direct and indirect economic impact and benefits from selected library services. One task here will be to operationalize both qualitative and quantitative measures; another will be to determine the reliability and validity of the measures, and insure that the technique for summarizing the various measures produces useful estimates of economic impact.

**Phase IV: Data collection and analysis**. Four Months. With the refined framework and operationalized measures, the study team will then develop and refine the survey instruments and other data collection techniques as previously described in this chapter. Although initial pretests for the instruments are promising, there is additional work to be done in insuring the use of high quality data collection instruments. Furthermore, the study team would like to consider the use of multi-method data collection approaches (including focus groups, cost-benefit analysis, etc.) to supplement the surveys. Finally, this phase would conclude with an analysis of the data collected.

**Phase V**: Final report and dissemination. Three months. A draft report will be developed and reviewed by the advisory committee. Then the study team will produce the final report and disseminate it to project sponsors. The study team will also provide Executive Project Briefings to all project sponsors as well as disseminate study findings via the project website, professional meetings, and other opportunities as appropriate.

This approach should provide the study team, the project sponsors, and the advisory committee with ample opportunity to refine and develop the project such that it can be completed successfully.

## Financial Matters and Preliminary Budget

The study team proposes a project budget of $250,000 to complete the study as described in this chapter. We suggest that the project cost be shared equally among multiple state library agencies and other possible sponsoring organizations. There are two approaches for managing the financial activities. In a first approach one of the sponsoring organizations would serve as the fiscal agent for the study and the other organizations would contract services from it. That organization would then subcontract for the project directly with the Information Use Management and Policy Institute at Florida State University. A second approach would be that each of the project sponsors would contract directly with the Information Use Management and Policy Institute at Florida State University. The Institute would prefer the first approach due to the additional effort that would accrue by managing multiple separately budgeted accounts.

A preliminary budget for the project would show approximately 60% of costs for the study team from the Institute—including McClure, other professional staff, and graduate research assistants. Another 10% would be directed to a subcontract with an external consultant (Bruce Kingma) especially knowledgeable in economic analysis and measurement. We would anticipate approximately 15% of the budget for travel related to field-testing of measures and data collection instruments in the states participating in the project. The remaining 15% of the budget would be dedicated to communications, supplies, copying, software, books and educational matters, etc. Assuming interest on the part of potential sponsors for the study, a detailed budget will be developed.

## Importance/Benefit of the Proposed Project

The results from our study of economic impacts from public libraries in the state of Florida demonstrate that there are significant impacts and benefits that do occur. It also suggests that there is a range of factors and contingencies that affect the degree, to which a library does, in fact, provide economic impacts and benefits. Moreover, it is much easier to describe what these impacts are as opposed to being able to measure those impacts and benefits in dollar amounts. Nonetheless, the work completed in this study does suggest an approach to produce useful cost estimates for impacts and benefits as outlined in this chapter.

Increasingly, public libraries will need to be better able to justify their existence in terms of their contribution to the local and state economy by identifying specific impacts and be able to put a dollar equivalent (or some other type of equivalent value) on those impacts and benefits. State library agencies also need this type of information to be able to demonstrate to state government officials that returns from public libraries are worth the investment. Unfortunately, an example such as the public library in Jacksonville, Florida, where voters approved a $150 million library building and development program, is the exception and not the rule. Indeed, in this particular instance, city officials clearly indicated their belief that the $150 million was an investment that would pay huge dividends for the city and surrounding area.

Completion of the study as outlined in this chapter will provide an approach that will help the sponsoring states demonstrate the value of public libraries in economic terms. It will also provide a method and approach that can be used on a longitudinal basis so that comparisons can be made over time as to the role and importance of public libraries in promoting economic development. And equally important, the method can be used individually by public libraries as well as by the state library agency to describe impacts and benefits statewide.

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# Appendix

# A

# Service Logs

# PUBLIC LIBRARY USE IN FLORIDA: ECONOMIC IMPACTS LOG

**Instructions:** Thank you for agreeing to keep a log of instances where your provision of a service, a resource, or other library activity may have resulted in *economic* benefits or impacts for a library user group. Include incidents from your personal experience during the February 14 to February 27, 2000, time period, or from incidents reported to you by other staff in the library during that time. A significant economic benefit or impact is one that markedly improved a user's or organization's economic or financial health; saved them money or resources; or allowed the person or organization to accomplish or do something that promoted the economic well-being of the community or state that otherwise could not have been done had this service not been obtained from the library. We are especially interested in documenting significant economic impacts. You may glean the impacts from your interaction with patrons or you may wish to ask them to clarify the impacts. Once you have completed 10 instances on this log, return the form to Bruce Fraser, Florida State University, School of Information Studies, Tallahassee, FL 32306-2100 (email any questions to Fraser at bfraser@lis.fsu.edu ). ***Please note***: Each log is to be filled out by only one librarian over the course of two weeks. Please do not give this to another librarian to fill in data unless you cannot complete the form.

Another purpose of the log is to identify library users who might be willing to meet in a focus group with the consultants conducting this study to discuss their use of the library. If possible, please determine if the person you describe would be willing to meet in such a focus group at the library at some date in the future for no more than a one-hour discussion session. **THANKS FOR YOUR HELP.**

Name: _____ Name of Library: _____ Phone/Email: _____

| Item No. | Date | Library Service Used | Description of Incident | Benefits or Impacts on User | Availability for Focus Group? Name/Phone? |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | | | | | |

| Item No. | Date | Library Service Used | Description of Incident | Benefits or Impacts on User | Availability for Focus Group? Name/Phone? |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 2 | | | | | |
| 3 | | | | | |
| 4 | | | | | |
| 5 | | | | | |
| 6 | | | | | |

| Item No. | Date | Library Service Used | Description of Incident | Benefits or Impacts on User | Availability for Focus Group? Name/Phone? |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 7 | | | | | |
| 8 | | | | | |
| 9 | | | | | |
| 10 | | | | | |

***PLEASE CONTINUE ON BACK OF THIS PAGE IF ADDITIONAL ROOM IS NEEDED**

# Appendix

# B

# Patron Survey

**Survey of Economic Benefits and Impacts from Florida Public Libraries**
**May / June 2000**

Thank you for participating in a study of the benefits and impacts of Florida public libraries. The study is being conducted on behalf of the State Library of Florida in Tallahassee by Dr. Charles R. McClure, Dr. Jane B. Robbins, and Bruce T. Fraser of the Information Use Management and Policy Institute at the School of Information Studies, Florida State University. Your participation will involve completing this survey and should take approximately 5-10 minutes of your time. *Please complete this questionnaire and return it to a librarian before you leave.*

Your participation in this study is voluntary. If you choose not to participate or complete the survey, there will be no penalty. The questionnaire is anonymous. The results of the study may be published but your name will not be known. If you have any questions concerning the research study, please contact Mr. Fraser by telephone at (850) 645-3328, or by e-mail at <bfraser@lis.fsu.edu>. *Thank you for your time and interest in libraries.*

**Background (Completely fill in the most appropriate circle for each question for example: ● Female)**

1. *Age*: O Adults 18–35 O Adults 36–55 O Adults 56 and older

2. *Gender*: O Male O Female

3. *Highest level of education completed*: O High School or less O Some College
   O College Graduate or more

4. *How often do you use this library?* O 1 to 2 times a week O 2 to 3 times a month
   O 3to 5 times in six months O Once a year or less

*For questions 5, 6, & 7 please completely fill in the response that best describes your thoughts about each statement according to the following scale, for example:* 1 2 3 ● 5

1=Disagree 2= Somewhat Disagree 3=Neither Agree or Disagree 4=Somewhat Agree 5=Agree

| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 5. Libraries have contributed to the **prosperity of the local/state community.** | O | O | O | O | O |
| 6. Libraries have been **economically beneficial to local businesses.** | O | O | O | O | O |
| 7. Libraries have contributed to my **personal financial well-being.** | O | O | O | O | O |

**Economic Benefits and Impacts (Completely fill in all that apply, for example**: ● Increases values)

8. Do you think that the ***presence*** of this library in your community: (Fill in all that apply)

O Improves overall quality of life
O Attracts *new* businesses to the community
O Increases local property values
O Attracts patronage to local businesses

**Continued on back**

**Survey of Economic Benefits and Impacts from Florida Public Libraries**
**May / June 2000**

**Economic Benefits and Impacts – *continued* (Completely fill in all that apply, for example: ● Increases values)**

9. In your recent visits to the library, has the library assisted you by providing information or services that:

*Personal*: (Fill in all that apply)
- O Enhanced your personal fulfillment or to manage finances/save money
- O Nurtured your love of reading
- O Provided "peace of mind" or a source of joy/happiness

*Your Job*: (Fill in all that apply)
- O Helped you obtain a new job
- O Helped you with a job search/business opportunities
- O Made you more productive on your job

*Civic Involvement*: (Fill in all that apply)
- O Helped you with civic duties or politics
- O Supported community agencies
- O Helped with issues concerning community development

*Local Business*: (Fill in all that apply)
- O Helped you improve or start your business
- O Promoted your use of a local business

*Computers*: (Fill in all that apply)
- O Helped you gain/improve computer skills (e.g., training)
- O Introduced you to new technologies (e.g., the Internet)
- O Encouraged you to get your own Internet account from an Internet service provider (e.g., Freenet, AOL)

*Education*: (Fill in all that apply)
- O Helped with English as a Second Language
- O Improved literacy
- O Helped with primary/secondary education
- O Helped you plan for college
- O Supported your education in a ***formal*** post-secondary school, college, or university class
- O Facilitated life long learning or contributed to learning and education but ***not*** via a formal classroom setting

*Miscellaneous*: (Fill in all that apply)
- O Helped you accomplish a task or reach a goal
- O Helped you obtain general (non-critical) information
- O Provided you with critical information (e.g., legal, health)
- O Helped you obtain information that you could not have obtained elsewhere

10. What are the two most important economic benefits that you have received from this library? *Please be as specific as possible.*

A. _____

_____

_____

_____

B. _____

_____

_____

_____

**Thank you for your time and opinions**

# Appendix

# C

# Directors/Managers Survey

**Library Directors Survey:**

**Economic Benefits and Impacts from Florida Public Libraries**
**May / June 2000**

**Background Library Information**

1. Library Name: _____
2. Address: _____
   _____
3. Director's Name: _____
   Phone: _____ E-Mail: _____
4. Contact Person: _____ E-Mail: _____
5. Population Service Area of this library outlet: _____
   (if unavailable use system, please check which one used) ○ library outlet ○ system
6. This year's annual total operating budget for this library outlet: _____
   (if unavailable use system, please check which one used) ○ library outlet ○ system
7. Number of hours this library outlet is open to public per week: _____

**Economic Benefits and Impacts (Completely fill in all that apply, for example: ● Educational facility)**

8. Please indicate the library services that you feel have contributed to the **prosperity of the local/state community.** *(Fill in all that apply)*

- ○ Programs to promote economic development
- ○ Facts & statistics for economic development
- ○ Educational facility
- ○ Public meeting place
- ○ Government resources
- ○ Other: _____
- ○ Information about local & state businesses
- ○ Resources for real estate-related research
- ○ Support of local culture and arts
- ○ Community outreach programs
- ○ "Safe place" for after-school children

9. Please indicate the library services that you feel have been **economically beneficial to local businesses.** *(Fill in all that apply)*

- ○ Small business tax information
- ○ Exhibit space for local artists
- ○ Local job postings
- ○ Directory of local and state businesses
- ○ Free space for organizations
- ○ Demographic information for marketing purposes
- ○ Supplement special libraries of local businesses
- ○ Resources for non-profit planning
- ○ Electronic equipment & resources
- ○ Lecture hall for small business education opportunities
- ○ Patent information
- ○ Legal information/resources
- ○ Business-related programs & workshops
- ○ Business resources or business-related databases
- ○ Other: _____

10. Please indicate the library services that you feel have contributed to **user personal financial well-being.** *(Fill in all that apply)*

- ○ Job or career planning resources
- ○ Salary statistics to obtain pay raise
- ○ Information on investments or business ventures
- ○ Business-related materials and resources
- ○ Information on income tax preparation
- ○ Information needed for purchase/sale of car or boat
- ○ Resources for college planning
- ○ Other: _____
- ○ Computer equipment and Internet access
- ○ Legal information & resources
- ○ Health information resources
- ○ Travel information
- ○ Access to government agencies & resources
- ○ Consumer information for comparison-shopping
- ○ Bookmobile

11. Has the library assisted in providing information or services that:

Employment *(Fill in all that apply)*
- O Helped users obtain a new job
- O Helped improve an existing business
- O Helped users with a job search
- O Made users more productive on their job
- O Helped users with career decisions
- O Other: _____

Local Business *(Fill in all that apply)*
- O Supported the starting of a business
- O Promoted the use of a local business
- O Helped with incorporation process/procedure
- O Enabled research for a business
- O Helped users learn about new jobs or other business opportunities
- O Other: _____

Civic Involvement *(Fill in all that apply)*
- O Helped with community development
- O Supported democratic and political processes
- O Supported community agencies
- O Other: _____

Personal *(Fill in all that apply)*
- O Enhanced users personal fulfillment
- O Encouraged love of reading
- O Information provided "peace of mind"
- O Provided a source of joy/happiness
- O Helped users family or friends
- O Other: _____

Education *(Fill in all that apply)*
- O Helped with primary/secondary education
- O Supported user education in a ***formal*** post-secondary school, college, or university class
- O Provided learning assistance for disabled individuals
- O Helped with English as a Second Language
- O Helped users plan for college
- O Improved literacy
- O Facilitated life-long learning
- O Provided early childhood learning experiences
- O Contributed to users learning and education, but ***not*** via a formal classroom setting
- O Other: _____

Miscellaneous *(Fill in all that apply)*
- O Helped with legal problem
- O Helped with consumer decision
- O Helped users manage personal finances
- O Contributed to users overall financial success
- O Helped users accomplish a task or reach a goal
- O Provided users with critical information
- O Helped users understand medical condition/diagnosis
- O Helped users obtain information that saved them money
- O Helped users obtain general (non-critical) information
- O Helped users obtain information that they could not have gotten elsewhere
- O Other: _____

Computers *(Fill in all that apply)*
- O Gained/improved computer skills
- O Introduced users to new technologies (e.g., the Internet)
- O Encouraged users to get their own Internet account from a local/other Internet service provider
- O Other: _____

12. Do you feel like the ***presence*** of the library in the community: *(Fill in all that apply)*

- O Increases local property values
- O Attracts *new* businesses to the community
- O Other: _____
- O Attracts patronage to local businesses
- O Improves overall quality of life

13. Please indicate the programs that your library offers: *(Fill in all that apply)*

- O Storytime Programs
- O Storytelling Programs
- O Tutoring Programs
- O Programs for the Deaf
- O English Language Programs
- O After school programs
- O Programs for the Visually Impaired
- O Other (please list any programs not listed):
- O Recreational programs/activities
- O Technology education programs
- O Computer literacy training
- O Manners for modern children program
- O Employment training in technical/computer skills

_____

_____

_____

_____

14. Please indicate the services that your library offers: *(Fill in all that apply)*

- O Books by mail
- O Free tax help and forms
- O Large print book collection
- O Answer center (e.g., business related questions)
- O Tourism service to library users
- O Staff fulfilling a full-time role as technical instructors to library users
- O Other (please provide any services not listed):
- O Assist users with job search / employment
- O Voter registration, election materials
- O Financial aid services via the Internet
- O Book sales at bargain prices
- O Act as central information/resource center for municipalities
- O A designated staff member to handle business-related issues and services

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

15. List ways that you promote your library's programs and services (e.g., newspaper; presentation to local civic groups):

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

# Appendix

# D

# Group Interview Questions Guide

PART ONE - INTRODUCTION (5 minutes)

FACILITATOR:

A. Thanks and appreciation for taking time to attend
    1. Introduce yourselves, how long in area
B. Objective of the focus group -
    1. Who we are (State Lib of FL, FSU, etc.)
    2. What we are trying to do (e.g., figure out if a business model called "Return on Investment" (ROI) can be used to measure the impact of public library services and products in Florida; short explanation of ROI)
    3. Why we are doing this Study (need for justification, shrinking public dollars, rising costs, etc.)

C. Explanations
    1. Length of group interview - promise to end on time
    2. Confidentiality of participants
    3. Free to leave at any time
    4. There are no "wrong" answers; everyone's input on the topic of economic impact of public library service is welcome, encouraged and will be incorporated.
    5. What the Focus Group is NOT: (e.g., not an opportunity to make changes or suggestions about specific library services, operating procedures, taxes, or leadership; no one is expected to be an economic analyst - your impressions and opinions are what we're interested in)
    6. Any questions? Comments?

QUESTION ONE: In a survey we conducted earlier this year, patrons identified many services that the library provides, which resulted in economic benefit to themselves or this community. For example, a patron borrowed a book on car repair and was able to save money on having the car serviced. Many patrons do investment research for their portfolio or for their retirement, and increase their net worth. And many others do research in order to start a small business in this area, hire employees, pay taxes and thus benefit the community. What are some examples you can share about economic benefits from your public library?
*[Objective: warm up the group; focus attention on economic examples; foster personal investment in the conversation. Caution: steer clear of dollar figures at this stage.]*

QUESTION TWO: How many books do you think this library system owns?
*[Objective: What are the perceptions about the asset valuation of the local library? Emphasize the value of the community resource. Prompt: "How much money is invested in this library?" Have figures on collection by format - books, periodicals, videos, music, etc.]*

QUESTION THREE: How much money do you think this library spends annually for each man, woman and child it serves? [Have Expenditures per Capita figure for LSA available, both collection and operating expenditures.]
*[Objective: Compare perceptions with actual figure; stress the totality of services for the cost per capita.]*

QUESTION FOUR (specific to library users): The **Library Name Public Library**gets $xx.xx per capita to provide library services. Would you be willing to spend more for more library services? How much more?

*[Objective: Assess willingness to pay, impressions of taxation level, services received, elasticity of value, relative to library itself]*

QUESTION FIVE: Your local government is responsible for many services; for example, waste disposal, parks and recreation, storm water management, regulatory agencies, fire and police protection, schools and roads. In your opinion, what is the economic impact of libraries in your community compared to some of these other services?
*[Objective: hierarchy of economic value among publicly-funded services and their economic impact. Caution: steer clear of pitting one service against another: emphaszie that all are vital and valuable.]*

QUESTION SIX: Do you think that the public library contributes to any of the following:
- Higher voter participation?
- Better grades in school?
- More new businesses in the area?
- Better overall quality of life?
- Other (from survey)

How? To what extent?
[Have Cost Matrix Available]
*[Objective: measuring impressions of intangible, incalculable economic impacts]*

QUESTION SEVEN: Let's imagine certain services at your local library were not available. How much would you expect to pay in the commercial sector for the following services?
- To rent a book for three weeks?
- To rent a movie on videotape?
- To read a newspaper at a coffee house? (e.g., cost of coffee)
- To do a search on the Internet (say, at an Internet café, or cost-per-use Internet service)
- To do have a stockbroker do investment research?
- Hiring a babysitter to read to your children? (e.g., story time)
- Hire a tutor for help with homework/reading skills?

Anticipated answers:
- Dollar figures (e.g., $2.99 for a feature film from Blockbuster Video);
- "wouldn't pay anything, would do without the service"
- service not available elsewhere at any price (e.g., in the case of borrowing books)

*[Objective: Begin to assess perceived costs of services in order to gauge dollar figures to the extent possible; examples of Miami-Dade and Winter Park]*

QUESTION EIGHT: Imagine you are the director of the **Anytown** Public Library. How would you characterize the return on investment to the taxpayers in your town? How would you justify the expense of a library, and what should city (alt. county) leaders know about the economic benefit to patrons?
*[Objective: catch-all, open-ended question; may yield glaring omissions, helpful advice]*
**To be completed on paper.**

PART THREE - CONCLUSION (5 minutes)

Thanks, facilitator's contact information if anything comes up later for participants, gifts for participants.

# Appendix

# E

# Group Interview Survey

**Name of Public Library**
**Group Interview Survey**
**Month, xx, 2000**

*Thank you for participating in today's focus group. Your responses to this survey will be kept confidential, and will be helpful in understanding the economic impact of public libraries in the state of Florida. This project was initiated by the State Library of Florida under the direction of the Information Use Management and Policy Institute in the School of Information Studies at Florida State University.*

---

Name: _____ Position or Title: _____

May we contact you by telephone or e-mail for more information regarding your responses?

❑ Yes, please contact me. I am interested in sharing my ideas and concerns

Phone: _____ E-Mail: _____

❑ No, thanks.

---

**1.** In your opinion, what are the three or four most important ECONOMIC benefits of your local public library to *you*?

1) _____

2) _____

3) _____

4) _____

**2.** In your opinion, what are the three or four most important ECONOMIC benefits of your local public library to *your community*?

1) _____

2) _____

3) _____

4) _____

**3.** Please include any comments, concerns and suggestions you have for the researchers in this study

_____

_____

_____

_____

**Thank you for attending today's session. Your time and participation in this study are greatly appreciated**

# Appendix

# F

## Economic Benefit Survey
## With
## Estimated Tax Statement

## Moderators Script for Administering the: Survey of Economic Benefits Realized from Florida Public Libraries

**Statement for participation of human subjects**

Thank you for participating in a study of the economic benefits from Florida public libraries. The study is being conducted on behalf of the State Library of Florida in Tallahassee by Dr. Charles R. McClure, Dr. Jane B. Robbins, and Bruce T. Fraser of the Information Use Management and Policy Institute at the School of Information Studies, Florida State University. Your participation will involve completing this survey and should take approximately 15 minutes of your time.

Your participation in this study is voluntary. If you choose not to participate or complete the survey, there will be no penalty. The questionnaire is anonymous. The results of the study may be published but your name will not be known. If you have any questions concerning the research study, please contact Mr. Fraser by telephone at (850) 645-3328, or by e-mail at <bfraser@lis.fsu.edu>, the phone number and e-mail address can be found at the end of the first paragraph on the front of the survey (*Note if possible the moderator should write the phone number and e-mail address on a whiteboard or other display medium).* Again thank you for your time and interest in libraries.

**Part 1 (A ,B & C) Placing a dollar value to programs and services**

Statements A, B and C seek the realistic value you place on programs and services offered by the library. This information will help us to establish the return that taxpayers receive on their investment in Florida's public libraries.

In statement A, consider the list of library programs and services listed and assign a dollar value to each of those that you have used today, that you would be willing to pay in additional taxes annually if it were not currently available at the library.

For statement B, using the same criteria for valuing programs and services, please give some thought to any other program or service that you have used today that we have not listed, and list those along with the amount in additional taxes you would be willing to pay. If you have any questions regarding the choices and the value you wish to place on them I will be glad to answer them and give you some direction.

For statement C, please indicate what you have done to obtain the program or services you used today if the library was not available.

**Part 2 (A & B) Placing a dollar value in tax reduction for eliminated programs and services.**

Statements A and B will assist us determining the programs and services that public libraries offer in terms of their importance to patrons and regardless of the return on investment the particular program or service gives to taxpayers.

In statement A we would like you to consider all of the programs and services listed that you have used today, and indicate the amount of tax dollar reduction annually you would accept if that program or service were not available at the library. In considering these choices please provide a reasonable dollar amount based on the worth program or service to you.

For statement B please indicate additional programs or services that are not listed that you have used today, and the amount of tax dollar reduction you would accept if that program or service were not available at the library. Again if you have any questions regarding the choices I will be glad to answer them.

**Part 3: The overall value of the library**

In part 3 we would like your assessment of the overall value of having the library in your community.

**Survey of Economic Benefits Realized from Florida Public Libraries**
**August 2000**

**PART 1**

**Please fill in all that you value with a dollar amount.**

A. *Of the following library programs or services that you have used today, please supply a dollar ($) amount indicating the amount you would pay in additional taxes annually if it were not currently available at the library.*

____ Assistance or information to aid your finances (e.g., save money, invest money)

____ Assistance in identifying financial aid for post-secondary programs

____ Assistance with identifying post-secondary educational programs

____ Obtaining legal information

____ Obtaining medical information

____ Assistance in learning new technology/software

____ Access to the Internet

____ Email account

____ Reference Desk

____ Videos (renting)

____ Storytime

____ Use of research materials (e.g., encyclopedias)

____ Craft activity programs

____ Children's after-school programs or use (e.g., tutoring)

____ Children's books

____ Support with a job search or business opportunities

____ Information to help you be more productive on your job or in your business

____ Training to help you be more productive on your job or in your business

____ Obtaining information in improving a business

____ Obtaining information in starting a business

____ Obtaining information for educational research

____ Obtaining support with homeschooling

____ Newspapers (e.g., local paper, Wall St. Jrnl.)

____ Magazines (e.g., Consumer Reports, Time)

____ Information for self-help or how-to projects

____ Audio / Music

____ Tax information

____ Special events (e.g., art shows, lectures)

____ Books for young adults and adults

____ Consumer purchase information (e.g., auto)

B. *Are there any additional programs or services that you used today that you can indicate the amount you would pay in additional taxes if it were not available at the library?*

_____

_____

_____

_____

C. *What would have done to obtain the programs or services you used today if the library was not available?*

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

**Survey of Economic Benefits Realized from Florida Public Libraries**
**August 2000**

**Part 2**
**Please indicate the amount in tax reduction you would expect for the elimination for each program or service.**

A. *The average household in Florida pays $50 per year in support of libraries. If the library did not provide any of the following programs or services that you have used today, how much of a tax reduction annually would you accept for the elimination of the program or service?*

____ Assistance or information to aid your finances (e.g., save money, invest money)
____ Assistance in identifying financial aid for post-secondary programs
____ Assistance with identifying post-secondary educational programs
____ Obtaining legal information
____ Obtaining medical information
____ Assistance in learning new technology/software
____ Access to the Internet
____ Email account
____ Reference Desk
____ Videos (renting)
____ Storytime
____ Use of research materials (e.g., encyclopedias)
____ Craft activity programs
____ Children's after-school programs or use (e.g., tutoring)
____ Children's books
____ Support with a job search or business opportunities
____ Information to help you be more productive on your job or in your business
____ Training to help you be more productive on your job or in your business
____ Obtaining information in improving a business
____ Obtaining information in starting a business
____ Obtaining information for educational research
____ Obtaining support with homeschooling
____ Newspapers (e.g., local paper, Wall St. Jrnl.)
____ Magazines (e.g., Consumer Reports, Time)
____ Information for self-help or how-to projects
____ Audio / Music
____ Tax information
____ Special events (e.g., art shows, lectures)
____ Books for young adults and adults
____ Consumer purchase information (e.g., auto)

B. *Are there any additional programs or services not list that you have used today, that you can indicate how much of a tax reduction you would accept for the elimination of the program or service?*

_____

_____

_____

_____

**Part 3**
*What do you feel is the overall value of having a library in the community?*

_____

_____

_____

_____

**Survey of Economic Benefits Realized from Florida Public Libraries**
**August 2000**

**Please supply the following demographic information:**

Approximately how many times a year do you visit the library? _____

Approximately how much time did you spend at the library today? _____

Approximately how long did it take you to travel to the library today? _____

GENDER: _____Male _____Female RESIDENT OF THIS COUNTY: _____Yes _____No

STATUS:

__ student __ full-time work __ part-time work __ retired __ currently not working

Spouse/partner (if applicable):

__ student __ full-time work __ part-time work __ retired __ currently not working

Approximate annual family income

__ 0-$15,000
__ $15,000-$30,000
__ $30,000-$40,000
__ $40,000-$50,000
__ $50,000-$60,000
__ $60,000-$70,000
__ $70,000-$80,000
__ $80,000-$90,000
__ $90,000-$100,000
__ $100,000-$150,000
__ $150,000-$250,000
__ over $250,000

# Appendix

# G

## Economic Benefit Survey Without Estimated Tax Statement

## Moderators Script for Administering the: Survey of Economic Benefits Realized from Florida Public Libraries

**Statement for participation of human subjects**

Thank you for participating in a study of the economic benefits from Florida public libraries. The study is being conducted on behalf of the State Library of Florida in Tallahassee by Dr. Charles R. McClure, Dr. Jane B. Robbins, and Bruce T. Fraser of the Information Use Management and Policy Institute at the School of Information Studies, Florida State University. Your participation will involve completing this survey and should take approximately 15 minutes of your time.

Your participation in this study is voluntary. If you choose not to participate or complete the survey, there will be no penalty. The questionnaire is anonymous. The results of the study may be published but your name will not be known. If you have any questions concerning the research study, please contact Mr. Fraser by telephone at (850) 645-3328, or by e-mail at <bfraser@lis.fsu.edu>, the phone number and e-mail address can be found at the end of the first paragraph on the front of the survey (*Note if possible the moderator should write the phone number and e-mail address on a whiteboard or other display medium).* Again thank you for your time and interest in libraries.

**Part 1 (A ,B & C) Placing a dollar value to programs and services**

Statements A, B and C seek the realistic value you place on programs and services offered by the library. This information will help us to establish the return that taxpayers receive on their investment in Florida's public libraries.

In statement A, consider the list of library programs and services listed and assign a dollar value to each of those that you have used today, that you would be willing to pay in additional taxes annually if it were not currently available at the library.

For statement B, using the same criteria for valuing programs and services, please give some thought to any other program or service that you have used today that we have not listed, and list those along with the amount in additional taxes you would be willing to pay. If you have any questions regarding the choices and the value you wish to place on them I will be glad to answer them and give you some direction.

For statement C, please indicate what you have done to obtain the program or services you used today if the library was not available.

**Part 2 (A & B) Placing a dollar value in tax reduction for eliminated programs and services.**

Statements A and B will assist us determining the programs and services that public libraries offer in terms of their importance to patrons and regardless of the return on investment the particular program or service gives to taxpayers.

In statement A we would like you to consider all of the programs and services listed that you have used today, and indicate the amount of tax dollar reduction annually you would accept if that program or service were not available at the library. In considering these choices please provide a reasonable dollar amount based on the worth program or service to you.

For statement B please indicate additional programs or services that are not listed that you have used today, and the amount of tax dollar reduction you would accept if that program or service were not available at the library. Again if you have any questions regarding the choices I will be glad to answer them.

**Part 3: The overall value of the library**

In part 3 we would like your assessment of the overall value of having the library in your community.

**Survey of Economic Benefits Realized from Florida Public Libraries**
**August 2000**

**PART 1**

**Please fill in all that you value with a dollar amount.**

A. *Of the following library programs or services that you have used today, please supply a dollar ($) amount indicating the amount you would pay in additional taxes annually if it were not currently available at the library.*

_____ Assistance or information to aid your finances (e.g., save money, invest money)
_____ Assistance in identifying financial aid for post-secondary programs
_____ Assistance with identifying post-secondary educational programs
_____ Obtaining legal information
_____ Obtaining medical information
_____ Assistance in learning new technology/software
_____ Access to the Internet
_____ Email account
_____ Reference Desk
_____ Videos (renting)
_____ Storytime
_____ Use of research materials (e.g., encyclopedias)
_____ Craft activity programs
_____ Children's after-school programs or use (e.g., tutoring)
_____ Children's books
_____ Support with a job search or business opportunities
_____ Information to help you be more productive on your job or in your business
_____ Training to help you be more productive on your job or in your business
_____ Obtaining information in improving a business
_____ Obtaining information in starting a business
_____ Obtaining information for educational research
_____ Obtaining support with homeschooling
_____ Newspapers (e.g., local paper, Wall St. Jrnl.)
_____ Magazines (e.g., Consumer Reports, Time)
_____ Information for self-help or how-to projects
_____ Audio / Music
_____ Tax information
_____ Special events (e.g., art shows, lectures)
_____ Books for young adults and adults
_____ Consumer purchase information (e.g., auto)

B. *Are there any additional programs or services that you used today that you can indicate the amount you would pay in additional taxes if it were not available at the library?*

_____

_____

_____

_____

C. *What would have done to obtain the programs or services you used today if the library was not available?*

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

**Survey of Economic Benefits Realized from Florida Public Libraries**
**August 2000**

**Part 2**
**Please indicate the amount in tax reduction you would expect for the elimination for each program or service.**

A. *If the library did not provide any of the following programs or services that you have used today, how much of a tax reduction annually would you accept for the elimination of the program or service?*

_____ Assistance or information to aid your finances (e.g., save money, invest money)
_____ Assistance in identifying financial aid for post-secondary programs
_____ Assistance with identifying post-secondary educational programs
_____ Obtaining legal information
_____ Obtaining medical information
_____ Assistance in learning new technology/software
_____ Access to the Internet
_____ Email account
_____ Reference Desk
_____ Videos (renting)
_____ Storytime
_____ Use of research materials (e.g., encyclopedias)
_____ Craft activity programs
_____ Children's after-school programs or use (e.g., tutoring)
_____ Children's books
_____ Support with a job search or business opportunities
_____ Information to help you be more productive on your job or in your business
_____ Training to help you be more productive on your job or in your business
_____ Obtaining information in improving a business
_____ Obtaining information in starting a business
_____ Obtaining information for educational research
_____ Obtaining support with homeschooling
_____ Newspapers (e.g., local paper, Wall St. Jrnl.)
_____ Magazines (e.g., Consumer Reports, Time)
_____ Information for self-help or how-to projects
_____ Audio / Music
_____ Tax information
_____ Special events (e.g., art shows, lectures)
_____ Books for young adults and adults
_____ Consumer purchase information (e.g., auto)

B. *Are there any additional programs or services not list that you have used today, that you can indicate how much of a tax reduction you would accept for the elimination of the program or service?*

_____

_____

_____

_____

**Part 3**
*What do you feel is the overall value of having a library in the community?*

_____

_____

_____

_____

**Survey of Economic Benefits Realized from Florida Public Libraries**
**August 2000**

**Please supply the following demographic information:**

Approximately how many times a year do you visit the library? _____

Approximately how much time did you spend at the library today? _____

Approximately how long did it take you to travel to the library today? _____

GENDER: _____Male _____Female RESIDENT OF THIS COUNTY: _____Yes _____No

STATUS:

__ student __ full-time work __ part-time work __ retired __ currently not working

Spouse/partner (if applicable):

__ student __ full-time work __ part-time work __ retired __ currently not working

Approximate annual family income

__ 0-$15,000 __ $50,000-$60,000 __ $90,000-$100,000

__ $15,000-$30,000 __ $60,000-$70,000 __$100,000-$150,000

__ $30,000-$40,000 __ $70,000-$80,000 __ $150,000-$250,000

__ $40,000-$50,000 __ $80,000-$90,000 __ over $250,000